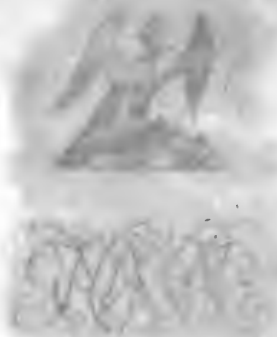






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WALTER COLYTON ;

A TALE OF 1688.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "BRAMBLETYE HOUSE," &c. &c.

Remember, O my friends ! the laws, the rights,
The generous plan of power delivered down,
From age to age, by your renown'd forefathers:
O let it never perish in your bands,
But piously transmit it to your children !

CATO.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WALTER COLYTON.

CHAPTER I.

Your virtues
Are sanctified and holy traitors to you.
Oh ! what a world is this, when what is comely
Envenoms him that bears it.

As You Like It.

IN a short time, affairs at Orchard Place resumed their customary train, and although the death of Richard, his supposed apparition, and the somnambulism of Edith, formed, for some time, the prevalent subjects of conversation in the Colyton family, their effects ceased to be felt, sooner or later, according to the temperament of the different individuals. The Squire, who had

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only been momentarily impressed with these occurrences, exhibited no diminution of his good spirits, taking his morning's ride as usual in his cavalier garb, with a silver whistle slung to his neck, and a whole troop of dogs at his heels, enjoying his dinner with the true relish of an epicure, quaffing his claret, smoking his pipe, singing snatches of Bacchanalian songs, whistling tunes, indulging in his afternoon's nap, and all the little personal selfish luxuries to which he had been so long habituated, while he occasionally varied his recreations by a practical joke upon Mapletoft, which he enjoyed the more, because the individual in question never suffered his calm, amiable, placid disposition to be ruffled for one moment, even by the coarsest freaks of his brother-in-law.

According to that beneficent provision of Nature, by which the mother's affections are more strongly directed towards the sickliest and most infirm of her offspring, as most needing the maternal offices, Mrs. Colyton had been tenderly attached to her son Richard, and had

been proportionably affected by his death, although she had long foreseen it; but time, that seldom fails to alleviate, if not to cure, every human grief, soon abated her sorrows; and as Edith, whose health continued extremely delicate, now daily required more of her care and attention, she had little leisure for the indulgence of unavailing regrets. Mrs. Colyton too, fortunately for herself, was never happy unless when employed, possessing that sort of mind which shakes off the corrosions of care by its own mere activity, as the rotatory mill-wheel throws from its surface those cankering substances, which would soon gnaw into its heart were it to remain stationary and in stagnant waters. Notwithstanding the multiplicity of her avocations, she would often steal an hour or two for a theological controversy with a travelling sectarian minister, or non-conformist neighbour. This was an old Puritan practice, in which she took especial delight, not because she ever made any converts to her own particular opinions, for she piqued herself upon

having a doctrine different from all others ; but because she never retired from one of these polemical contests without imagining herself to be the victor, and feeling a still more gratifying conviction of her own superior acuteness and biblical lore. She enjoyed them too with the keener relish, as she could never succeed in establishing one among her own family, Edith shrinking from them with a declaration, that as such discussions rarely changed the convictions of either side, all the unamiable feeling they are apt to generate was so much absolute unredeemed evil ; Hetty protesting, with great *naïveté*, that she did not understand one single syllable of the matter ; and the Squire, although he might have safely advanced the same plea, invariably receiving all overtures of the kind from his devout and disputatious spouse, with a verse of some merry song, or by whistling a loud and lusty tune.

Mapletoft in his rural rambles continued to be exposed to the ridicule of the Westen rustics ; who, when they saw him spouting and

apostrophizing with no other auditor than his inseparable four-footed guardian, would often indulge a laugh at the "rawny gawcum" as they called him, in allusion to his lean figure and supposed imbecility; while the more adventurous of the mischief-loving urchins in the vicinity, as he sate on a stile devouring his book, would occasionally tie straws, strips of paper, long weeds, or even a dead mole or rat to the tail of his wig, additaments which he rarely discovered, but would stride with them through the sniggering village, or carry this new sort of *Solitaire* into the drawing-room of Orchard Place, to the great indignation of its inmates. But these specimens of *mauvaise plaisanterie* were by no means unattended with danger to the performers; for in the first instance, the sagacious Keeper, penetrating the designs of which his master remained perfectly unconscious, would now and then threaten hostilities, by an angry growl and menacing display of his remaining teeth, chasing away the assailants by an occasional snap, just as he would a swarm of flies

when they presumed to beleaguer his own nose too importunately ; and secondly, the Squire, though he himself, assisted by comical Kit, indulged in an unbounded licence of practical jokes upon his brother-in-law, was so far from allowing the same latitude to others, that he had more than once severely horsewhipped the aforesaid juvenile delinquents when they happened to be detected in their pranks. To most boys, however, danger is a stimulant rather than a repellent ; there was a degree of glory in outwitting Keeper and defying the Squire, (for Mapletoft himself was never reckoned for any thing) ; and the consequence of these temptations, in addition to the pleasure of the joke itself, was the pretty frequent appendage to the scholar's pigtail of some sort of rubbish that could not be safely pronounced either ornamental or useful.

Hetty Chervil's situation in the Colyton family now became one of considerable embarrassment to a frank and ingenuous disposition like hers. She was carrying on a clandestine correspondence with Walter, contrary to the avowed

wishes of her benefactors, an apparent, not to say a real act of ingratitude, to which she endeavoured to reconcile herself by the fact that she had used no arts to inveigle his affections, and by that convenient morality which sometimes persuades young ladies that love, omnipotent and irresistible love, absolves its votaries from all the ordinary and vulgar obligations of society, and claims, as a superior power, their most implicit obedience to his behests. Up to this period there had never been any secret between herself and Edith, her constant play-fellow and companion from the time of childhood, to whom she had more than once thought of revealing her engagement with Walter, and asking advice as to her future conduct; but various motives had deterred her from making the communication.

Edith, who was inconceivably acute in all her senses and perceptions, quickly discovered a certain degree of constraint and reserve in Hetty's demeanour, for which she was at a loss to account. Educated together, there had ever been

a sisterly attachment between them, and indeed Edith's affectionate disposition led her to love every thing that came within the reach of her sensitive heart; and yet there was but little congeniality in their dispositions; the robust temperament of the farmer's daughter producing that natural cheerfulness which may be termed the health of virtue; while, if she did not possess the delicacy and refinement of her friend, she was never a victim to that sickly sensibility which, however it might accord with the hectic fragility of Edith's frame, was little conducive to her happiness, and indeed almost unfitted her for the ordinary purposes of life.

Trifling as was this seeming coolness on the part of Hetty, for it did not amount to any real estrangement, her friend felt it, her sensibility being as intense as that of the Mimosa; and she was therefore the more gratified when she learned that the Shelton family, between whom and the Colytons there had existed a considerable degree of intimacy, had returned to their residence at Hales Court, a sequestered house not

far from Orchard Place, but situated in a much more beautiful country, since it adjoined the well-wooded and picturesque estates of Sir Halsewell Tynte, in the vicinity of Goathurst. Dominick Shelton was a Catholic gentleman, but utterly free from the narrowness and bigotry which at that unhappy period too often characterized the religionists of the Roman persuasion. Although attached to his faith from education and from pride, for his ancestors had held distinguished rank in the church before the Reformation, he was too generous and liberal not to condemn all attempts at coercion in spiritual matters, and too enlightened not to foresee that the violent and impolitic measures of King James would defeat his own purpose, and be much more likely to subvert the throne than the established religion of the country. Retired in his habits, and delighting in the seclusion of his wood-embowered retreat at Hales Court, a strong sense of duty had nevertheless impelled him to remove for some time to London, in order that he might solemnly warn the king, while

there was yet time, and implore him to pause in a career which must inevitably terminate in convulsion and civil war. Having a relation who filled an office at Court, he found no difficulty in addressing James by letter, and even in procuring a personal interview ; but the infatuated monarch, deaf to the only monitors who sincerely wished to save him, sternly rebuked him as a lukewarm and degenerate Romanist, charged him with disloyalty and presumption, and indignantly dismissed him from his presence.

“ The gods previously stultify those whom they have determined to destroy,” ejaculated Mr. Shelton, translating the Latin adage, as he retired from the royal presence. “ The King’s fate cannot be much longer delayed ; some popular disturbance may be daily expected ; it will probably commence in the metropolis ; the Catholics will indisputably be its first victims, and I shall therefore lose no time in returning to my hermitage :” a resolution which he carried into immediate execution.

His family consisted of an only child, Agatha,

who was now about the same age as Edith Colyton, and an ancient relative, a Romish priest, whom he entirely supported, and who officiated every Sunday, when not prevented by his infirmities, before the little assembled household of Hales Court, all the domestics being of the same persuasion as their master. For this purpose a small apartment had been fitted up, so as to bear some resemblance to a chapel, a circumstance which, at a period when the national mind was absolutely insanified with a horror of popery and popish plots, was sufficient to beget all sort of absurd and injurious rumours. Hales Court, according to the notion of the besotted bumpkins in its neighbourhood, was a dangerous papistical seminary, where the most nefarious conspiracies were secretly hatched; the poor harmless old priest was a diabolical Jesuit, the master of the mansion an emissary of the Pope, and his daughter only fit to be burnt at the stake. Even the very paupers whom the latter sustained by her bounty, maligned instead of blessing her at the meals she

provided, so thoroughly can ignorant and perverted views of religion corrupt every principle of morality and right feeling.

Such was the miserable bigotry of the times that many were contaminated by those prejudices who, from their rank and education, ought to have entertained more liberal notions, nor could an exception be made in favour of the inmates of Orchard Place, Mrs. Colyton in particular, who inherited much of the Puritan narrowness of mind, stigmatizing her neighbours with the opprobrious terms which then formed the current vocabulary of every staunch Protestant. These sentiments which were equally ungenerous and unjust, whether applied to the Sheltons in particular, or to the Catholics at large, were destined to be partially corrected by a trivial accident. Richard, the invalid son, having fainted away while riding in an open carriage near Hales Court, was carried into the house, whence the sudden increase of his illness would not allow him to be safely removed for three days. During the whole of this time

he was tended with such an affectionate sedulity by the Shelton family, all of whom, as well as their servants, testified the tenderest and most delicate sympathy with the sufferer, that even Mrs. Colyton was disabused of her groundless rancour, the mother triumphed over the fanatic, Christianity in its enlarged sense superseded the narrow feeling of sectarianism, and she sincerely felt the gratitude she expressed, when she declared that each individual at Hales Court had indeed acted the part of the good Samaritan.

So reluctantly, however, do we abandon our prejudices, and so complacently do we attribute to others our own failings, that she made this concession in favour of one Roman Catholic family, an argument for additional bitterness against the rest, treating the Sheltons as an exception from an acknowledged rule, and observing that the mass of the Papists, having here and there a better example set before them, were the more inexcusable for cherishing such a blind, bigoted, remorseless animosity against the Protestants.

From this period the two families commenced visiting, each succeeding interview serving still more and more to ingratiate the Catholics with their Protestant neighbours, which latter phrase we adopt with the usual license when speaking of dwellers in the country, for their respective residences were some miles apart. Mrs. Colyton was delighted with the order, economy, and good management of Hales Court, where every thing was handsome, and nothing superfluous ; the Squire, discovering Mr. Shelton to be a perfect gentleman by birth, education, and manners, appreciated him highly, and cared little about his particular tenets, his own religion being pretty much confined to a profound hatred and contempt for those whom he invariably termed, when not within hearing of his wife, the low-lived rascally Roundheads. Nor was Mapletoft less gratified by the new acquaintance they had made, for he found in the old priest not only a pleasant inoffensive companion, but an excellent classical scholar, with whom he could tag verses, and interchange Latin quotations to his heart's content.

Poor, however, and feeble was the pleasure experienced by either of these parties compared to the ardour, the ecstasy with which the enthusiastic Edith quickly attached herself to Agatha Shelton, whom indeed it was scarcely possible to know without feeling for her a deep and passionate admiration. Even her appearance seemed to indicate that she was a being of a superior order, the majesty of her tall commanding figure, the calm dignity of her hazle eyes, the fine contour of her arched nose, the placid beauty of her mouth, and the dark masses of her exuberant hair, all seeming to testify that she was born for dominion, although it might be inferred, from the expression of her countenance, that she was too mild or too wise to exercise it. When she stood beside the delicate, transparent, fair-haired, fragile-looking Edith, the spectator might imagine that he was gazing upon the Minerva of the ancients, and a sylph of the fairy mythology. Nor was there less difference in their souls than in their frames, Edith being the creature of feeling and impulse, whose mind was so perilously poised that every

sudden oscillation threatened to throw it from its balance ; while the sedate, collected Agatha, governing herself by exalted and immutable principles, looked out upon the world with a firm self-possession, resolved to perform her duty at all hazards, and too undaunted either to anticipate evil, or to shrink from it when it came.

Great was the delight of Edith when informed by her father that the family of Hales Court had returned, and that having determined upon going over to visit them, he had dispatched a servant to announce his intention, in order to ensure their being at home.

“ Becky, and you, and Hetty,” said the Squire — “ will just fill the post-phaeton, I will ride Roan Rupert, Paul shall mount Dumpling, and Kit shall be our groom, for I am resolved that the whole family shall present themselves at Hales Court, not only to show our respect, but that we may learn the latest tidings from London, where great events are stirring.”

The motives thus assigned were by no means

the real ones, for Jaspar Colyton had very little neighbourly feeling of any sort, unless when it could be associated with some drinking bout or merry meeting. Even as a mere excursion of pleasure, for which he was at all times ready, he would hardly have thought of accompanying his own family on a visit to the Sheltons, but that, in conjunction with comical Kit, he had projected a notable scheme for amusing himself at the expense of his brother-in-law. Mapletoft, who was the kindest-hearted and most accommodating creature in existence, never made the smallest objection to any arrangement that was proposed, and as upon one or two former occasions he had exhibited himself upon horseback, although he was a bad equestrian, and disliked that mode of conveyance, there was no reason to conclude that he would hesitate about mounting Dump-ling, a remarkably quiet horse who had derived his name from his sleekness and rotundity of form. Paul indeed was a stranger to fear, and would with perfect unconcern have mounted a Hippogriff or one of the flammiferous

horses of the sun, had such an animal been offered to him, so that he was not likely to have any misgiving with reference to Dumpling, whose back he had already crossed.

He was not aware, however, that the horse in question, though perfectly tractable without a crupper, became instantly possessed by a devil when this addition was made to his saddle, a circumstance from which the Squire anticipated no small fun and frolic when Paul should be mounted on his back. Kit received instructions accordingly to affix the obnoxious strap, while the Squire reminding his kinsman that it became him to be somewhat smarter than usual on a visit of ceremony, brought him a pair of his own slouched boots, tendered him his silver spurs, and pinned to his button-hole a nosegay great and glorious enough for a Lord Mayor's coachman.

"Parce, puer, stimulis," exclaimed the scholar, rejecting the spurs — "Goodnow, brother! Dumpling needs them not, and truly it is a cruel thing thus to urge a dumb beast, *savis*

calcaribus, as the poet well expresses it. Howbeit, the boots are indispensable to a cavalier's equipment, and I will put them on."

This he had no sooner accomplished than the Squire, having previously fastened up the back of his broad brimmed hat into a spout, placed it upon Mapletoft's head, at the same time giving his long stiff pigtail an angular pinch, so that the last three or four inches of it pointed directly upwards to the sky. Having adjusted his spectacles to his nose, the scholar proceeded to mount, in effecting which his craggy knees escaped from his short nether garments, and the slouched boots, being much too large for him, presently fell to his ancles, so that he exhibited nearly the whole of his long spindle leg. The gaunt figure sitting bolt upright, the huge nosegay, the spout-shaped hat, the porrected pigtail, rearing itself up like an irritated snake, completed the grotesqueness of his appearance, and egregiously delighted the Squire.

"Hey, boys, hey—yoho!" shouted the latter, who never moved without a train of dogs at his

heels, and now summoned them first by blowing his silver whistle, and then by a metrical call, which he sung in a stentorian key, giving a loud halloo ! at the end of each line.

“ Hey ! Ponto, and Smiler, and Chanter, and Jowler,
Halloo !

Dash, Sweetlips, and Trimbush, and Ringwood, and
Prowler—Halloo !

Come Duchess, and Pincher,

And Juno, and Flincher ;

Sing hey-down-derry !

So blithe and so merry—Halloo !”

The dogs thus summoned came barking and leaping around, while at the same time was heard a wailful howl from Keeper, who being too old for such an excursion, had been locked up, and seemed to forewarn his master, by this prophetic cry, that he quitted his customary guardian under sinister auspices.

“ Truly now, brother, I protest that I would have asked Becky to take poor Keeper in the phaeton,” said Mapletoft, “ had I thought of it ; for, this plaintive ululation appeals to one’s very heart.”

“ We have no time now,” cried the Squire, “ so come along. ‘ ’Tis sack makes us sing,—Hey-down-a-down-ding,—*Paulo majora canamus.*’ There’s Latin for you, and I know you will follow that through fire and water—away we go !”

Up to this period Dumpling had not forfeited his established character for docility ; but he was no sooner in motion, and sensible of the unusual appendage to his croup, than he began to wince and fidget, and curvet and caracole after a very portentous mood, at the same time accelerating his pace as if he could run away from the annoyance.

“ Nothing in the world but play,” exclaimed the Squire, hardly able from laughter to keep his own seat, when he saw the similar difficulty to which Paul was exposed.

“ Verily now, brother, I like not horse-play, seeing it is an animal to which we entrust our necks, and which cannot therefore be too sedate and serious. Soho, poor fellow ! Dumpling is not at all like himself to-day, is he ?”

“ No, indeed ; he is more like hasty pudding.”

“ Brother, brother, that is a poor paronomasia, only worthy of Sir John Minnis, or Dr. Smith, whose quiddets—wo-woho!—whose quiddets, I say, you may have read in the *Musarum Deliciæ*. What *can* be the matter with the beast ? Perhaps the poor creature is hungry, and if so, I ought not to have been put upon his back till he had fed, inasmuch as I am no Hippodamus, and do not pretend to be *flectere doctus equos*. Ha ! what was that ? I protest I was almost off !”

“ Oh all ye kickshaws and kicksey-wickseys !” ejaculated Kit, “ Dumpling has thrown up his heels !”

“ Goodnow, I suspected as much ! what can he want ? did you ever know him do so before ?”

“ No, Sir,” replied Kit, “ whenever I have known him to kick, it has always been behind. I ’m sure the creature used to be as tame as a mad bull, and as quiet as a cat-a-mountain. Check him, Sir, check him !”

“ I do, but he will not stop, even for an instant. *Stare loco nescit*, like the horse whom Virgil describes in his third Georgic. Soho, poor fellow, Soho !”

“ Paul, Paul ! take care how you use that expression,” cried the Squire ; “ it was the word of battle at Sedgemoor, chosen by the Duke of Monmouth, because, as I presume, his London house was in Soho Square, and it may bring you into trouble, if you are thus heard shouting it upon the King’s highway. There he goes again ! never mind him Paul, stick your knees in, keep well back in the saddle. That’s it ! *Mort de ma vie !* I wish Gibbons the sculptor were here to take model of you for an Equestrian statue. Ha ! did Dumpling think to throw you by that fling ? ’Sdeath ! a centaur might as well attempt to throw himself from his own back.”

“ Goodnow, brother, the creature is mad, he gets worse and worse, nothing but up and down, up and down ;—I might as well be tossed in a blanket—one would think he had war and tumult in his belly, like the Trojan horse. Ha !

another kick ! I protest I shall be thrown.” And without resigning the reins the discomfited, though not intimidated scholar sought an inglorious safety by twisting the forefinger of his left hand in the mane of his refractory steed.

“ Daffodils and dumplings !” cried Kit — “ seize the crupper, Sir, with the other hand, give him his head, and the beast will go as gently as a cracker in the air.”

Obeying this insidious advice, which indeed seemed well calculated to give him a firmer seat, the unlucky cavalier grasped the crupper with his right hand, thus galling the animal still more, and occasioning it to practice a rapid succession of kicks and plunges, until its rider, whose hat was jerked off at the outset, but who still kept his seat with a marvellous tenacity, formed no unapt anticipation of the tailor riding to Brentford, as it is at present enacted in some of our amphitheatres. Sympathizing with the apparent delirium of Dumpling, the dogs barked and bounded around him, kicking up the

dust on all sides ; the Squire and Kit followed close at their heels, laughing and hallooing ; and as the words were jerked out of Mapletoft's mouth, like pellets from a popgun, he might be heard by snatches exclaiming—"goodnow ! —Bellerophon !—I protest !—Phaeton !—Soho, poor fellow !—Bucephalus !—*quæ te dementia cepit ?*—Virgil—Wo-ho ?"

In this manner the capering, barking, laughing, shouting, dust-enveloped party soon overtook the ladies, when Mrs. Colyton had no sooner discovered the perilous antics of Dump-ling, than she became seriously alarmed for her brother's safety, and, like Mrs. Gilpin in a similar predicament, called out to him most earnestly to stop and dismount.

"Goodnow—Becky—Catiline—*abiit—evasit—excessit,*" were the only sounds that could be heard from the passing horseman—"The rest the gods dispersed in empty air."—How long Dumpling might have continued to perform these capriccios, or what might have been their termination, it is impossible to say, had not the

crupper fortunately come unbuckled, when the scholar in one of his jerks drew it from under the tail of the animal, who was no sooner freed from the cause of all his irritation than he presently drew up, shook himself all over, turned round his head, whinnied, and stood perfectly still as if awaiting the arrival of the other horses, a truce of which his rider took advantage to adjust himself afresh in the stirrups, take out his pocket-handkerchief, remove his spectacles, and wipe the profuse perspiration from his reddened face and brow. The Squire and Kit presently came up, when the latter restored his hat, exclaiming — “Castor and Pollux! Beavers and Bear-gardens! you stuck to your saddle, Sir, like a monkey upon a dancing bear! I can’t think what can have possessed the beast, though to be sure it has afforded rare sport to master, who has been as happy and gigglesome as a live eel in a frying-pan.”

“Paul, Paul!” cried the Squire, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes, “I had no idea you were such a horseman. Zooks! I

shouldn't mind matching you to ride a steeple chase, either with Sir Halsewell Tynte, or Sir Francis Warre of Hestercombe; but what the dickons could have made you and honest Dumpling pitch yourselves against one another in such a desperate wrestling-match?"

"Goodnow, brother! I protest I believe the poor creature was annoyed by this *infandum lorum*, this unlucky strop; for no sooner was it removed from beneath his tail, than lo! he became instantly as docile as you now behold him."

By this time the phaeton came up, when Mrs. Colyton leaving Edith, who had been exceedingly agitated at her uncle's perilous exploits, to the care of Hetty, jumped out, ran up to Mapletoft, inquired eagerly whether he had been hurt, and implored him to dismount and join them in the phaeton. No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, and no man is a philosopher to his horse, an *esprit de corps*, a feeling of kind, prompting the most phlegmatic biped of the human species to assert his supremacy

over a four-footed competitor. Paul was not only incited by the praises that had been bestowed upon his horsemanship, but piqued to a certain extent against the refractory Dump-ling, under the joint influence of which feelings he declined his sister's invitation, and declared, as he drew up the reins and fixed himself more firmly in the saddle, that he would show himself to be the master, by riding his steed on to Hales Court, and back again to Orchard Place. Nor had he, as in the case of Johnny Gilpin, occasion to repent this boast; for the horse, wearied with its exertions, was right glad to perform the remainder of its journey in perfect tranquillity.

On their arrival it was found that the amiable family of the Sheltons had put themselves into mourning for Richard's death—a mark of attention and condolence with which Mrs. Colyton was much gratified, but which, by recalling her recent loss, had an injurious effect upon the over-sensitive Edith, already much agitated by her uncle's supposed peril. Running up to her

friend with extended arms in order to welcome her return, she was suddenly overpowered by her emotions, her head sunk upon Agatha's bosom, and she burst into an hysterical passion of tears. In order that the other females might uninterruptedly minister towards her recovery, the gentlemen withdrew into an adjoining chamber, where the Squire and Mr. Shelton soon became engaged in discussing the recent political occurrences in London; while Mapletoft, who, from the effects of dust and heat, and his retaining the stalks of his huge bouquet, though the flowers had all been shaken off, presented a most ludicrous appearance, pounced eagerly upon Father Bartholomew the old priest, and drawing him aside, instantly plunged into an animated *tête-à-tête*. At first it might be judged that he was narrating his own recent endurances, for his companions might catch at intervals the phrases—"Philip, who, as his name indeed imports, was a lover of horses—Bucephalus—Hippona—Hippomanes—*saltu superare viam*," and similar snatches; but the scholars soon became

deeply immersed in a learned disquisition upon classics and Delphin editions, with an occasional digression upon some of the scientific discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton. So much were they absorbed in these subjects, that neither of them observed the entrance of a servant with glasses and refreshments, until the Squire, slapping his kinsman on the shoulder, exclaimed,—

“’Odsheart, Paul ! sure you must be thirsty after such hard riding and long talking. Here are bright beakers, man, with sparkling wine and foaming ale ; so a fico for Latin and Greek.

Let us drink and be merry, dance, joke and rejoice,
With claret and sherry, theorbo and voice.

Here’s to you in a bumper, and to you, mine honest neighbour Shelton, and to you, Father Bartholomew, who I know will pledge me if I talk Latin to you, and so you shall have it in the words of the song :—how runs it ?—something about Orlando, then comes—

He is an ass,
That from hence doth pass,
Nisi bibit ad ostia stando.

There ! if that 's not honest Latin, you must blame Frank Beaumont, and recollect that I don't wear a shaven crown."

The old man willingly pledged him in the challenged bumper, observing, with a good-natured smile, that as they did not often get such cheerful visitants at Hales Court, he hoped its present enlivener would soon return to taste another bottle of their claret, which his kinsman had imported direct from France.

"That will I do, or I am no true toper," cried the Squire ; "but you must all come over shortly to Orchard Place, to try whether I cannot match it ; and in the mean time, as a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, we must not leave the present bottle unfinished."

Just as they had completed their repast, they were rejoined by Mrs. Colyton, Hetty, and Agatha Shelton, bringing intelligence that Edith was better, though still a good deal discomposed, and all uniting in a petition to the Squire that she might be allowed to remain a few days at Hales Court, where the change of

air, scene, and society, might have the most beneficial effects upon her health. To this proposal her father easily yielded his assent ; when the Colytons and Hetty shortly after took their departure, Mapletoft, in spite of his sister's entreaties, persisting in remounting Dumpling, who, as if anxious to make atonement for his former misconduct, carried him back safely and quietly to Orchard Place.

CHAPTER II.

I saw the bouncing Bellibone,
Hey, ho, Bonnybell !
Tripping over the dale alone ;
She can trip it very well.
As the bonny lass pass'd by,
Hey, ho, bonny lasse !
She roved at me with glauncing eye,
As clear as the christall glasse.

The Shepheard's Calender.

MRS. COLYTON, who did not easily renounce her prejudices, had taken Edith apart before she consented to her remaining at Hales Court, and had strictly charged her, in a pious and prosing homily, to absent herself from the religious ceremonies of the family ; above all, to return instantly to Orchard Place, should any attempts be made to convert her to popery.

In the bottom of the maternal heart there lurked a secret misgiving that this might be the real motive of the earnestness with which all had concurred in the invitation ; but if this were not an unnatural fear, considering the character of the bosom wherein it sprang, it was both an ungenerous and an unfounded one. None of the Sheltons, not even the old priest, entertained that miserable spirit of proselytism, which only worshipping self, while pretending to adore truth, feels its pride flattered by winning over others to its own narrow opinions, and gratifies its hateful passions, by denying the benefits of salvation to all who dissent from it. Although they were Catholics, the inhabitants of Hales Court, rising superior to the spirit of the times, disclaimed all such unchristian Christianity. They had too much delicacy to dream of introducing any theological subject, where their motives might be misapprehended, seeking rather to soothe and gratify the sensitive mind of Edith by alternate occupation and amusement, and by lavishing upon

her those minute attentions and ingratiating offices of friendship, which had marked their demeanour towards the deceased Richard, when for a short time he had been their inmate. Quietly and unobtrusively as these acts of unremitting kindness were ministered, not one of them was thrown away upon the quick-sighted Edith, who felt them with a deep though silent gratitude, and whose health and spirits were manifestly improved by the society of her beloved Agatha, and her removal to a scene, which, from its embowered, romantic, and secluded character, possessed the charm of novelty, while it was, at the same time, singularly congenial to her disposition.

“We have nothing to offer you,” said Mr. Shelton, two or three mornings after her arrival—“that may compete with the cheerfulness of Orchard Place, where the influx of visitors, the occupations of your family, and, above all, the presence of your merry father, for ever singing to his dogs, his horses, or to himself, supply a scene of constant animation.

Here we live like hermits, although involuntary ones, for I would gladly associate with the neighbours who now keep aloof, and who, I hope, will one day know us better; and as for Agatha, I often tell her, as she wanders amid the leafy cloisters of our groves and gardens, that she is a nun in every respect, except that of having taken the veil. But if the beauties of nature can make you any compensation for the pleasures of society, you will not perhaps have been a loser by your visit to Hales Court; and to prove to you that I do not boast in vain, I shall be happy to accompany you and Agatha in a walk through our grounds, which are but of moderate extent, although varied in their character."

"O Sir! talk not of my being a loser in any sense," exclaimed Edith, with ardour—"Have I not here both social and natural pleasures united? More enlightened minds, or affectionate hearts, I could never find, even in the bosom of my own family; and I cannot express to you how much I am enchanted, how

exquisite is the pleasure I derive from the sylvan and picturesque beauties of Hales Court, contrasting as they do with the bare, flat uninteresting fields or open moors with which I am surrounded when at home. Agatha ! Agatha ! I will run for her. I shall be delighted to accompany you."

There was good reason for the enthusiasm with which Edith spoke of the surrounding scenery, although she had hitherto seen but little of it, the house hanging like a bird's-nest amid a wilderness of boughs and leaves, which afforded glimpses rather than views from the windows, or from the embowered lawn in front, while the ground at the back rose so rapidly as to afford no prospect but that of trees, climbing above one another. Agatha was soon found and equipped for their excursion, when Mr. Shelton, passing out of a gate on one side of the lawn, conducted his companions to a walk, that wound for some distance under a hanging coppice, planted with sycamores and maples, while the ground was thickly covered

with wild foxglove and tufted lilies of the valley, clustering around the roots of the trees which overcanopied the walk in its whole extent. Sometimes their branches were so thickly interwoven as only to admit a cool, dim light, that seemed to have acquired a green hue, as it oozed through the leaves; while at others the sun darted from partial openings, flickering upon the golden grass as the waving boughs checquered it with their shade; but the hand of art was everywhere carefully concealed; the walk, which was not gravelled, seemed to be a natural one, the wild flowers and bushes of hawthorn, briar, and woodbine, on either side, being left undisturbed. Rustic seats were distributed at intervals, and Edith gladly rested herself upon one placed beside a cool pellucid brook, surrounded with aspens, whose rustling leaves sounded like a waterfall, blending not inharmoniously with the song of the numerous birds who had built their nests in this secure asylum.

“How lulling and delicious,” exclaimed

Edith, "is the enjoyment that seems to pervade every sense of the body, and every perception of the mind, as we sit here inhaling fragrance, listening to Nature's music, beholding her beauties on every side, or looking upwards through the branches at the blue heavens, as they hang serenely over this little bower of tranquil loveliness. If I might judge by my own delightful sensations, I should say, that a scene like this would soothe the heaviest heart."

"Few, however, are so sensitive as your own," said Agatha; "but, in truth, it is a pleasant, tranquillizing spot, whose benignant influence has been experienced both by my dear father and myself, when we have resorted to it with wounded feelings. But we have finer and grander views than this, and if you have rested long enough, we will lead you towards them."

"My body has rested long enough, but my mind would be content to linger still at this sweet spot. However, I am ready to accom-

pany you." She started up, and they proceeded along the same path, which now became narrower and darker, from the umbrageous canopy over-head, while they were occasionally obliged to pass beneath rude arches of rock, where the obscurity was purposely deepened, in order to heighten the effect of the opening, to which they were gradually winning their way along an imperceptible ascent. They gained it at length, suddenly emerging from the leafy gloom upon a grassy eminence, which, shelving gently down to a sheet of water beneath, commanded an extensive sunny landscape of the most unbounded fertility and beauty. Immediately upon their left were the stately woods of Sir Halsewell Tynte, affording a glimpse of the noble park, animated with deer, and of Goathurst Church; the groves of Hales Court extended to the right; in front, the eye luxuriated to the distance of twelve miles over a vast vale of rich enclosures, spotted with hamlets and spires, and gleaming objects, and bounded by the Bristol Channel, radiant

with sun-light ; from the midst of which, the Steep Holm rose boldly and abruptly, presenting its shaded side to the spectators, while the view was terminated by the Welsh mountains, towering one above another, in every variety of light, outline, and hue.

There was a silence of some minutes ; for the Sheltons wished to afford their visitant, who had never been to this spot before, leisure to discover all its beauties ; and when Agatha, at length, inquired whether the prospect equalled her expectations, the enthusiastic Edith was at first unable to make any articulate reply. Her voice was shaken to pieces by deep emotion ; she pressed both her hands upon her heart, as if to control its throbbing, and the tears of silent ecstasy coursed one another down her cheeks.

“ My dear friend, you are ill ; you are deeply affected,” exclaimed Agatha.—“ What has overcome you so suddenly ?”

“ Delight !” faltered Edith, in an emphatic whisper—“ an ecstasy most sweet and holy ;

this grandeur of scenery is more than beautiful ; it is sublime, awful,—my heart swells.—I feel as if I were ushered into the presence of my Creator, and ought to sink instantly down upon my knees to worship him.”

“My sweet young friend,” exclaimed Mr. Shelton, “I trust you may never have occasion to regret this exquisite susceptibility.”

“Oh Sir ! if you did but know how it enhances all my pleasurable sensations !”

“I doubt it not, but unfortunately it will in the same proportion add poignancy to those of an opposite nature, and as the sources of pain predominate in this our probationary stage of existence, I tremble to think of the trials to which you may be exposed in your progress through life. Far, far be it from me, however, to wish that you should suppress any of the devotional enthusiasm kindled by the glories of the universe. Much rather would I encourage such holy transports. Ay, indeed, this outspread bible of earth, sea, and sky, upon which we are now gazing, is one that all may read, and about

which none can differ, since every leaf exhibits in unchanging and indelible characters, the might, majesty, and mercy of the Creator."

"I wonder not at your enthusiasm, dearest Edith," said Agatha; "this noble prospect is affecting even to me who have so often visited the Druid's Seat, as we call this little alcove, from the oaks that overhang it. That man, methinks, must have done much to shake off all the finer instincts of our nature who can look out upon this lovely scene and not find every bitter feeling chastised, and every unholy or immoral thought rebuked within him. For my own part, I never sit here without an instant sensation of increased sympathy both with heaven and earth; for I hold it impossible to love the Creator without loving what He has created, and above all, that which He has formed in his own image."

"Right, my child, right!" exclaimed Mr. Shelton; "the love which makes us consider all our fellow creatures as our brethren, must be the most acceptable homage to the Universal Father,

who treats the whole human race as his children, and most conformable to that benign religion, whose Founder has said, ‘If ye love me, love one another.’”

“Oh that all could hear these generous and exalted sentiments!” cried Edith; “that so they might indignantly shake from them for ever their errors and their groundless prejudices. How is it possible, my noble-minded friends, that you can have been so much misunderstood by your neighbours?”

“Because they have been hasty and unjust,” said Agatha.

“Rather say, because they have been misled, and have not chosen to know us because we are Catholics,” said the father calmly. “If men would but seek one another fairly, they would generally find more to esteem than to condemn, and dislikes would often be turned into friendships.”

In such conversation, and in pointing out to each other the various beauties of the view, which Edith contemplated with an undiminish-

ed intensity of delight, some time was happily passed, until Agatha, declaring that her domestic avocations could not longer be delayed, proposed that they should return to the house. This was accordingly done ; when Edith, leaving her friend to her household duties, betook herself to the lawn, which was separated by a sunk fence from a little grassplot that skirted the high-road. Here we must leave her for the present, that we may accompany the reader to the farm-house of the Chervils, the parents of Hetty. On the morning to which we have now brought our history, Madge Chervil, like a thrifty and industrious housewife, was busy in making some dumplings for the younger branches of her family, when upon looking from the window she suddenly exclaimed—

“Lockyzee ! here be a vine gennelman o’ horseback a cooming up to tha door ! Shower as a gun he do want to zee our Ned’s piece o’ writing, and only ta think what a mess I be in ! I must hirn up stairs to wash my hands and put on my clean cap. Here, Meg ! Meg ! take thic

yapron and drive down tha dowst from the clavy, and wipe the best chair, and make th' auld sheep dog like auver the drashel, and shove away theasamy rames o' tatoes that our slottering Sal ha' left on the vloor, and let thic pot-liquor be drode into tha draffit, and make tha place as cleansome as ye can. I 'on't be long agwon; set out the best chair for the gennelman, I'll be back in a jiffey." And so saying, away she hurried, looking at her flour-bedaubed hands as she turned them backwards and forwards.

"Hoyty-toyty," cried Margaret pettishly, "what next, I wonner! One would think I was a common choor-woman. A vine gennelman o' horseback! Zo it be, begummers! and sim to be as handsome a young spark as ever I would wish to zee on a zummer day. What a desperd pity he should vind me in my worky-day donnins!" She ran in a prodigious pucker to a piece of broken glass that hung against the wall, and had no sooner caught a glimpse of herself than exclaiming, "Zookers! I vorgot my hair war in papers; I do look vor all the

wordle like a mommick !” she scudded away in order to arrange her curls, without attending to a single one of her mother’s directions.

Old Jan Chervil, the grandfather, and his superannuated dame, were, however, still left in the room, the former leaning upon his favourite crutch-headed stick as he sate in the sunshine of the open door, endeavouring by the assistance of spectacles to read the Bible; the latter ensconced in her customary corner, where she was placed to be out of the way, and plying her eternal spinning-wheel, as if she were herself a piece of machinery.

“ My good friends,” said the stranger, putting his head into the room, while he still held the bridle of his steed from which he had dismounted, “ can you tell me the horse-road to Goathurst ? and will you still farther oblige me by a draught of beer, or even of milk and water, for I see no public-house in this hamlet. and I have been riding in the heat for some hours ?”

“ Anan !” ejaculated the old man who had

not heard a syllable of what he said, "speak up, nif you please, Sir, vor I be a zummat dunch."

"It's niver-the-near, Sir, to talk to my gaffer," cried the dame, quitting her wheel, curtsying as she hobbled forward, and speaking in the high shrill key she had acquired from screaming to her husband. "I can hear whatsomiver ye may ha' to zay, but as to Jan he be as dunch as a stwon, poor creetur! Ye may suppaws, amaybe, he were reading the Bible. Dear hort! he do but snaggle auver it like, vor his eyes vail en, spite o' tha sparticles on's nose, and zo do his legs too, vor the matter o' thic. Aw, Sir, tha more's tha pity, 'vor a better and kinder-horted gaffer than auld Jan Chervil niver druv plough nor stood atween the stilts, and a good husband hath he been to me, Lord love en! Aw, Sir, it's a sad thing when poor volk auverlive their eyes, and their ears, and their legs, as he hath a doo'd, and I may thank the Lord that I hain't alike Jan, vor I can zee to zet up the spill and worra of my wheel as well as ever, aw, and to dird a niddle, too;—I can

hear the humming o' tha bees and dumbledores in our gorden, or the purring o' tha cat when she sitteth in yonner winner, and I can stump auver to Bedgwater, and that's more nor Jan hath a dood theazam vive year. To be shower I bain't zo auld as him by a whol twelvemonth, and thic do make all the differ atween us, as it's naatal it shoo'd, you knaw, Sir."

"Perfectly," said the stranger smiling, "but nevertheless I should be glad to learn the road to Goathurst."

"Dang it! I ha' vound thee out," cried the old woman peering in his face, the expression of her countenance suddenly changing to a look of vacant simpering imbecility as her wandering wits deserted her. "Thee casn't take in auld dame Chervil, a b'leeve. Thee beest one o' the player volk from Bedgwater that rode Skimmerton, and played the heydigees last Hallantide. Aw, ees, I ha' vound thee out, I ha' vound thee out, zo don't ee think to coom here a galliganting, for we ha' no gingleling girls hereaway."

“Poor auld soul!” exclaimed the husband, as his dame hobbled back to her wheel and resumed her spinning; “don’t ee mind her vlother and northering talk, Sir, for her wits be quite betwattled, thof she be the best creetur in the whol parish o’ Liney vor all thie. It’s quite shocking ta zee how she do vorget all mander o’ things, and dwon’t sometimes even knaw her own gaffer. Aw, thank God! I bain’t zo far agwon as she. What thof I be zummat dunch, and can’t zee ta read without sparticles, and bain’t quite so lissome as I war vorty year agoo, I niver talk in thie nonation style; I ha’ got all my gumption about me as sharp as ever, and thie be the main thing auver all, bain’t it, Sir?”

The stranger was amused by this instance of the natural selfishness of old age, even in a mutually attached couple, thus congratulating themselves on their freedom from each other’s infirmities, and respectively deeming each lot to be the most fortunate. He thought it perfectly natural that they should snatch at every consolation within their reach; but as he wanted to

learn the horse-road to Goathurst, rather than the respective ailments of these rustic ancients, he repeated his question in a tone that reached the ears of old Jan Chervil, notwithstanding his wife's averment that he was "as dunch as a stwon." Before he could answer it, however, his daughter-in-law re-entered with a clean cap, holding Ned's far-famed piece of writing in her newly washed hands. Mortified as she was at finding that the stranger had not come to inspect it, she civilly furnished the information he required; and in compliance with his farther request, mixed him a cup of milk and water, during the presentation of which Meg returned to the room, blushing and bridling in the pride of her jauntily arranged curls, and of a sky-coloured neck-handkerchief which she had pinned on as becomingly as possible.

"Plague take the wench!" cried the mother, irritated at finding that none of her orders had been obeyed. "What! hast been dizening and curling instead o' doing what I told ee? Begwon then, we dwon't want ee here, so hike

up to the lawt and gee zome pollard to the rabbits. Dwon't ston' wheckering there, but trudge, I tell ee, or I'll gee zummat you 'on't ax me vor."

Meg retreated proudly and poutingly from the room, but not till she had thrown a side glance at the visitant, a glimpse of whose handsome figure made her regret that she should be dismissed from his presence at all, and especially in so humiliating a manner. The stranger having received the most minute directions respecting the horse-track to Goathurst, for he particularly stated that he wished to avoid the high-road, took his departure, having previously slipped into his informant's hand half-a-crown, which the money-loving Madge received with a profusion of curtsies, deposited it carefully in a little leather bag, and then returned to the completion of the dumplings and the preparation of dinner, calling out to one of the youngsters: "Sal, Sal! turn tha glass, dwon't ye zee tha zond is all hirned out; you'll have a nought o' tha dumpling nif you dwon't mind

it." At the accustomed hour when the meal was ready the bustling housewife, whose face was crimsoned by her culinary exertions, hurried outside the door, beating a large empty milk-pail with a wooden bowl, and accompanying the hollow reverberations thus produced, with the sharp cuckoo-like halloo of a voice that was still more shrill and powerful than that of the old grandmother. At the well-known and welcome signal, which was heard far and near, Chervil and his son Ned, and two labourers came up from the fields, when the whole household sate down together to a plain but plentiful meal, to which every individual, from old Jan to the youngest of his grand children, did ample justice. No sooner was it completed, and the still sullen and pouting Margaret set to work in clearing away, than Madge took her husband apart, told him of the visit she had received from the stranger, stated that when he stooped down to take the milk and water, she had seen a small cross with a silver greyhound attached to it hanging round his neck, and

grounding her opinion upon this mysterious circumstance, as well as upon the fact of his wishing so anxiously to avoid the high-road, gave it as her decided conviction, that he was bound to Hales Court upon some Popish plot, and that it was their bounden duty instantly to apprise Edith of her danger, and recommend her immediate return to Orchard Place.

“A cross round his throat,” said Chervil, shaking his head, and looking stolidly sapient—“and goo tha horse-track, which is a nation difficult one to volly without being mizmazed! why then, there must be a plot o’ zome zort, that’s my verdict, and therefore I zay ’t. But why shouldn’t us tell tha Squoire or Madam Colyton at Orchit Place, instead of trapesing auver all tha way to Hales Court?”

“Fags, Tummas! I thought ye knew it war niver-the-near to speak to the Squoire about a nought; and as to Madam, sim to I she be clear and shear overlooked by theazam Sheltons. No, we’ll zee Miss Edith her own zelf, and cry war-whing in her ear, and then if she

vall into the snare, 'twardn' our vault, you know."

"Well, Madge, nif you do make a pwint on't, we'll goo auver at once, vor it becomes us to be grateful to the Squoire's vamily, bin' he ha' always done zo much vor our Het. Lord love tha zweet maid! how pretty she do look in her black donnins, dwon't she?"

"Aw, Tummas! Tummas! Lord send it dwon't spwile the wench, and turn her head as it hath adood our Meg's. Tha girt gigleling goosecap thinks o' nought now but o' being a vine lady like her zuster, and goos trapesing about in long curls and vlickering in ribbons, instead o' minding the milk pail, and veeding tha pigs. Did ye mind how begrumpled and stomachy she war 'cause I snubbed her abit avore dinner? But she shan't downarg me as she do her Grammer and Gramfer, no, that's what she shan't while my name's Madge Chervil, and I do hope, Tummas, ye 'on't help to spwile her."

"Aw, weel, I'll jist don my Zunday qut and

hat, and then weel g' auver to Hales Court," said the husband, who was too quiet a man to argue with his spouse upon so interminable and intractable a subject as that of spoiling the children. Madge in the mean time arrayed herself in her best gown and hood, when the rustic couple immediately set off upon their well-meant, but most unnecessary expedition.

CHAPTER III.

Yea, this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume ;
So looks the strand whereon th' imperious flood
Hath left a witness'd usurpation.

SHAKSPEARE.

EDITH was seated upon the lawn at Hales Court, as already stated, reflecting upon the enlarged charity which not only governed Agatha's actions, but seemed to pervade every feeling of her heart, when she was startled at hearing herself called in a loud whisper, and still more surprized when, upon looking up, she beheld Chervil and his wife, who, having espied her from the road, had cautiously approached the sunk fence, screening themselves among the

branches that overhung one of its extremities. "Good Heavens!" ejaculated Edith, "what is the matter? Is all well at Orchard Place? Nothing has happened to dear Hetty, I hope?"

"No, Miss Edy, nought ha' hap'd to our Het, and all be buxom at Orchit Place, tha Lord be praised therevor!" said Madge, whom her quiet husband willingly allowed to be the spokeswoman; "but we ha' got a zummat to tell ye, nif we be sartin shower we shan't be auverheard by anone o' the Papishes here-away."

"You may speak freely; there is not a soul near us," said Edith.

Notwithstanding this assurance Madge looked suspiciously around her, after which she proceeded to state in an eager whisper the stranger's arrival at the farm, the mysterious cross and greyhound which she had discovered, her reasons for concluding that he was a Papist bound to Hales Court, and her conviction that some Popish plot was hatching, ejaculating at the conclusion of her narrative, "Now, Lors

love ye, Miss Edy ! 'on't ye quit theazam 'dolo-trous blood-drowthy volk, and goo whome along wi' us, avore ye be convarted, or any orra mischief be adood to ye !"

Edith, whose quick feelings made her somewhat hasty in her temper, had hardly patience to wait the conclusion of this ridiculous statement, and could not altogether repress her indignation as she exclaimed, " My good friends, how can you give way to such stupid prejudices and preposterous apprehensions ? Believe me, it would be well for all of us, if we were as good and as well disposed Christians as the excellent family with whom I am now residing. I am obliged by the interest in my welfare which has induced you to take so long a walk, but I must request that you will immediately return to the farm, attend in future to your own concerns, and leave me to manage mine."

It may be doubted whether honest farmer Chervil had ever encountered the Horatian dictum, that our minds are more slowly excited by what we hear than by what we see, but he had

evidently arrived at the same conclusion, for he took from his pocket one of the coarse prints, representing the cruelties to which the Protestants were subject in France under the persecution then carried on by Louis the Fourteenth: engravings wherein the imagination of the artist unnecessarily added horrors to the reality, and which had been widely circulated since the revocation of the Edict of Nantz, more especially by the English Protestants in the present crisis of their religion. As Chervil handed the print over the fence, he exclaimed with the look and tone of one who considers that he has advanced a conclusive argument, "There, Miss Edy, what zay to thic? 'Ool ye b'leeve now what zort o' butchers theazam Papishes be? Aw, ees, I zee ye do, and ye'll coom along wi' us, 'on't ye?"

Edith had cast her eyes upon the paper, but she instantly returned it, saying, "The family of Hales Court condemn the cruel and abominable proceedings of the French King, as much as you or I can, and I would not for the world that

they should overhear you, or see this offensive print. Away ! away ! return to your farm. I will listen no more to this nonsense."

"Remember, Miss Edy, there's a Roman parson in tha houz, that wears a bald head, and belongs to the Scarlet abomination, and crosses himzel' wi's vinger, and kneels down avore a mommick," cried Madge.

"And dwon't ee vorget, if any thing do happen," added the husband—"that I cried war-whing ! in your ear. Howsomdever, I do hope no offence, I do hope you'll vorgee us, and zo good bwye to ye, Miss Edy, good bwye !"

Edith having by this time returned towards the house, the disappointed Chervil and his wife were fain to regain the road, and trudge homewards, bitterly condemning her obstinacy and incredulity.

"Sim to me," said Madge, "she be clear auverlooked a'ready by Miss Agatha, as they do call tha creetur, thof I think mysel she be zome mander o' witch, and I woodn' mind betting a pwint o' yale she could niver cross

our drashel, bin there's a horse-shoe nailed athin it."

"Aw Madge, shouldn' wonner; and now you do talk o't, I should like a pwint o' yale, vor the zun be whot, and tha pilm do vlee zo in tha ruad, it ha' made me adrowthy."

Even the economical Madge had no objection to the refreshment mentioned; and they accordingly betook themselves to a public house at Goathurst, that they might rest and recruit before they set off on their return.

Edith would not unnecessarily hurt the feelings of the Sheltons by mentioning what had just occurred. She sate some little time in the library with father Bartholomew, a cheerful and most intelligent old man, when she was joined by Agatha, who proposed driving her out in a pony chaise through Goathurst Wood, observing that it afforded some very pretty scenery, though nothing of so grand a nature as the view from the Druid's seat.

"A wood is always delightful," cried Edith—"and doubly so to me whose customary rides

have been either to Burton or Sedgemoor, which my father thinks a much finer country for horse exercise than plantations and enclosures. To my taste, however, trees and shade and leafy recesses are a thousand times more charming. In the solitude of an open country there is something dreary and oppressive; in that of woods there is a soothing charm which seems to combine the pleasures both of companionship and loneliness."

"Such too was Shakspeare's opinion," said Father Bartholomew — "when he makes the woodland hermit exclaim—

' This our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.'

Go then, my daughters, and if such thoughts possess you while wandering beneath the Gothic arches of the boughs, Heaven's own architecture, you will be as holily employed, and as proudly bestowed, as if you were praying within the noblest cathedral ever reared by mortal hands."

The friends were presently equipped and seated in their little vehicle, when Agatha, to whom every road and green alley of the wood was familiar, drove to its most picturesque spots, often stopping to admire a particular tree, or even an old stump, or tawny flower-tufted bank, objects which, however uninteresting to the general observer, always possess a new charm for the landscape-painter.

“Excuse my loitering in this manner,” she exclaimed—“I am seeking materials for the foreground of my next painting, and you must not wonder therefore if dock leaves and fern, and weeds and stones, and old stumps find a value in my eyes though they may possess none in yours.”

“If mine tell you so, they do not express the truth,” said Edith; “for though I am not an artist myself, I have a keen enjoyment of all these minute varieties of tint and form to which you allude; not less than of the more conspicuous beauties of this charming wood. Linger, therefore, as long and as often as you please,

and do not fear that I shall become tired of the scenery, any more than of my companion."

"We are lucky, Edith, in the weather, which is perhaps more favourable to our purpose than if it were finer. The shadows of these heavy clouds heighten the brilliancy of the partial gleams of sunshine, thus throwing back the distances, and giving variety, expansion, and mellowness to the landscape, whenever the openings of the trees afford us a peep of it. Here we shall lose it, for the wood closes in upon us, compensating us, however, by its own beauties, for those which it shuts out."

"I suspect, nevertheless, continued Agatha, as the road presently emerged into an open glade—"that I should have done well to recollect the old proverb which warns us against crowing till we are out of the wood; for by the lurid and lowering clouds, by these whirling eddies of dust, and the squally gusts that wrestle angrily with the trees, I fear we are about to encounter a storm—the wind has suddenly changed. See! the clouds are driving towards

each other, and we shall do well to seek instant shelter. You are not afraid of thunder, I hope?"

"Not in the least, and yet I am so far corporeally affected by it that it generally occasions a violent palpitation of my heart. My only apprehensions would be for the steadiness of your pony, of which if there be any doubt, it might be prudent to dismount."

"Oh! I will answer for my four-footed friend, who is as quiet as a lamb. Ha! the big drops are pattering fast around us, we must fly to some covert. This oak is hardly leafy and tufted enough for our purpose; yonder chesnut offers us a better canopy. Wrap this cloak around you, dearest Edith; you are a fragile flower and require protection; I am of tougher texture, and so accustomed to exposure that I can almost defy the elements."

Scarcely had they reached the shelter of the out-spreading branches, when a vivid flash of lightning irradiated the dark glades and vistas of the wood; a crash of thunder burst over-head,

rolling sullenly off to the distance in growling reverberations, and the rain fell in rattling sheets as it was dashed against the trees by the storm-gust.

“How magnificent is this elemental war!” exclaimed Agatha; “what can be more tremendous than the peal we have just heard,—what more sonorous and grand than the roar of the wind amid this sea of waving branches and fluttering leaves, a wind which almost ‘makes flexible the knees of gnarled oaks,’ as if to realize the sublime hyperbole of Shakspeare; and how reverend and profound should be our conviction of the divine might and mercy, when we reflect that this apparent wrath of nature is but an act of beneficence and love, destined to chase away noxious vapours, to purify the air, and to refresh the earth, which already sends up its grateful incense to the sky!”

“Nevertheless it is an awful spectacle!” said Edith, in a solemn voice. “When I contemplate its fertilizing results, my bosom thrills with a complacent gratitude; but when I look upon

the terrible agency employed, my throbbing heart—”

She broke off suddenly, clinging to her friend with a start of surprise, for at this moment a riderless horse, whose footsteps on the soft turf had not been previously heard, burst from amid the trees, dashed past them at full speed, and was again out of sight in an instant, although they might still catch the rattling of the stirrups as they were whirled about him in his terrified flight.

“Good heavens!” ejaculated Edith, clasping her hands together, “some accident has happened; that wild animal, scared in all probability by the lightning, has doubtless thrown his rider.”

“It seems indeed too probable,” said Agatha, “but we know not what direction to take in search of his owner, nor are we sure that he has sustained injury, or requires other assistance than the recovery of his horse, in which, I fear, we can but little serve him.”

“The animal broke from yonder thicket on

our right, and if any accident has been occasioned by the lightning, it must have been within these few minutes, and cannot therefore have occurred at any material distance. Perhaps if we search beyond the thicket, we might discover—Hark ! hist ! methought I heard a faint halloo in the distance.”

“ Nothing, my dear Edith, but the wailing of the wind, as the gusts are broken by the trees.”

“ Listen ! listen ; there it is again ! I am confident I heard a human voice.”

“ Nay, if you are confident I will not contend the point, for I know that my sense of hearing is by no means so exquisite as yours ; but it still rains heavily, and if you do not object to being left alone for a short while, you had better remain under this friendly tree, while I drive on the pony in search of what I may discover.”

“ No, no, I will accompany you ; I care not for the rain—perhaps some fellow creature may be perishing for want of succour. There !

there ! I distinctly caught another halloo !
Dear Agatha, drive on, for heaven's sake !"

Her friend, who though less impetuous was quite as benevolent as Edith, urged the pony forward in spite of the pouring rain, which rendered all objects indistinct except those that immediately surrounded them. As they advanced, however, both caught at intervals the halloo which Edith's finer ear had been the first to distinguish, and hurrying forward in the direction of the sound, they were soon enabled to distinguish a man and woman standing under a tree at some distance a-head. On approaching them, Edith instantly recognized farmer Chervil and his wife ; but that which arrested her own attention as well as Agatha's, on their reaching the spot, was the appalling spectacle of a human body lying extended on the wet grass, as if suddenly arrested by the touch of death. It presented the appearance of a young and singularly handsome man, attired in a species of plain green uniform. His hat was off, and his dark locks were thrown wildly around

his features, the comeliness of which were still conspicuous in spite of their ghastly hue, and of a frightful contusion upon the forehead, where the skin was broken and discoloured, though no blood had exuded from the wound. Judging from the closed eyes, and the immobility of the livid face, life might have been deemed extinct; but the gentle and scarcely perceptible heaving of the chest, showed that the unfortunate sufferer had not yet breathed his last.

While Edith sunk back in the chaise with a faint shuddering shriek, and Agatha uttered an exclamation of surprise and deep emotion, Dame Chervil ejaculated, "Lors love us all, Miss Edy! be thic thee? Dear hort! dear hort! Only ta think o' tha' wonnerful ways o' nature! Why theas be the very zelf-zame gennelman we told 'ee of, that call'd at our varm in tha morning, and ax'd the ruad ta Goathurst, and lock-zyee, Miss Edy; here be the cross and greyhound tied round's throat wi' a black ribbon, and meaning zome zort o' popery, or witchcraft, or devildom anorra, there's niver a doubt o' thic.

And yet he's a proper likely gennelman to look at, bain't'n? His vlesh be as white as snaw; you may zee by his hons he ha' niver adone any work, and he ha' got fairy gifts on's vinger-nails."

"He breathes! he breathes!" exclaimed Agatha; "he may yet be saved; we must convey him instantly where he may receive succour."

"Oh yes, yes!" ejaculated Edith, as she leapt from the chaise, trembling all over with anxiety; "where does the nearest surgeon reside? by prompt assistance he may yet recover."

"'Slike enow," said Chervil, "vor I dwon't think he ha' any bwons abrauk, thof he ha' got a cruel touse on tha vorehead, sich as I wouldn' ha' had my own zel vor a zummat. You see, Miss Edy, we were a trapesing whome, when I zays to Madge, zays I—'Madge, thic gennelman yonner sim ta ride a proper tall horse, dwon't he?' 'Zookers!' cries Madge, 'shower and sartain it be tha very zame that was auver at our varm in tha morning. Well, avore ever we

got anear en, whiz ! cooms a vlash o' lightning that amawst put me into a mizmaze, and when I cood awpen my eyes agin there war the girt horse galloping away like ramping mad, and leaping cliver and shiver auver tha brimle bushes and what not that came in's way. But the gennelman stuck to en like a burr, till he bolted right under theas girt yock tree, when one o' tha branches took 'en smack athwart tha vorehead, and drode en down upon tha yarth, swop like a stwon, and he gee one kick wi' his voot, and I niver zeed en move a'ter. Zo Madge and me hirnd up to en, and when I had raught en, and look'd upon's vace, all zo dead like, I veel'd a drubbin athin my hort, and tha very hair o' my head zeemed all auver of a stiver."

"Enough, enough !" cried Agatha, who had also jumped from the chaise, "we are losing time ; we must raise the unfortunate man into the vehicle, and drive him to Hales Court, which is the nearest house."

"There were a Quar-man pass'd us awhile

agwon wi' an empty cort," said Madge, "zo I tould Tummas to shout a'ter en, thinking he mought ha' turn'd back, when we mought ha' hulved the gennelman into's cort; but it's niver-the-near to halloo to themmy that choose to be dunch, thof amaybe he coodn' hear, bin there were sich a duddering rumpus wi' th' wind and tha dunder."

"Our chaise will answer the purpose still better," cried Agatha; "lift him gently into it, my good friend; drive him over to Hales Court, for I myself should hardly have strength to prevent his falling out, and you shall be well rewarded for your trouble. We will accompany your wife to Goathurst, whence you shall both be conveyed to your own home, wherever it may be."

"Aw, Miss, I'll drive en auver, poor creetur, wi' all my hort, but I 'on't cross tha drashel o' Hales Court myzel, bin I ha' taken my woth niver to g' in any o' tha houzen o' tha Papishes; zo don't ye be vronted, Miss, gif I do stick to my woth. Now Madge, bear a hond; halve en

auver,—there—yezy, yezy—now tan, up wi' en into tha chay—there ! he bain't no girt heft, be en ?”

Having lifted the stranger into the low vehicle, Chervil placed himself beside him, and drove off towards Hales Court, after having received strict injunctions to lose no time, to desire one of the servants, as soon as he should reach the house, to ride off for a surgeon, and to direct that the wounded sufferer should in the mean time be placed in the hands of Father Bartholomew, whom Agatha stated to be well skilled in medicine. The chaise was presently lost amid the trees, and the three pedestrians exerting their best speed in following it, were not long in reaching Hales Court, when Agatha, finding that Chervil had faithfully obeyed all her orders, gave him a handsome remuneration, and directed that himself and his wife should be conveyed in a light cart to their residence at Liney. Knowing Edith's excessive delicacy of constitution, she insisted upon her immediately changing her clothes, which were thoroughly

drenched by the rain, and reminding her of her extreme sensibility, recommended that she should not seek any farther interview with the stranger until the surgeon should have made a report upon the injuries he had sustained, which might possibly be of a fatal nature. Agatha in the mean while, whose firmness and self-possession were not so easily daunted, hastened to the apartment in which the sufferer had been placed, where she found him attended by her parent and Father Bartholomew, the latter of whom was assiduously ministering such appliances as are usually employed to restore suspended animation. The stranger's cravat had been removed, giving to view his fair though manly throat, and as he reclined upon a couch with his dishevelled locks hanging over on one side, his eyes closed, a deathlike pallor overspreading his fine features, and his brow disfigured by a contusion, he might almost have been taken for a marble statue of the dying Adonis, or rather of the beautiful Hyacinthus, after his forehead had been stricken by the fatal quoit of Apollo.

For some time he gave no other signs of life than by breathing with greater freedom, but at length he sighed repeatedly, opened his eyes, looked wildly around him, and exclaiming in a faint voice, "Is Harry Sidney safe? Has Herbert escaped? Then I care for nothing—I surrender! I surrender!" he again closed his eyes, and relapsed into apparent insensibility.

"His bodily functions are returning," said the Priest; "but his wits may for some little time be disordered by the shock he has received, and we must therefore endeavour to promote sleep, Nature's great restorative, which is the safest and the best remedy."

"He had better be left to repose upon the couch," added Mr. Shelton, "since any fresh removal might add to his exhaustion."

"You can retire therefore," said the Priest, "and give orders that the house be kept as quiet as possible, while I watch by the side of my patient, who, I much fear, cannot yet be pronounced out of danger."

Agatha and her father were about to with-

draw, when the surgeon, who had been sent for, entered the apartment, and had no sooner learned the particulars of the accident, and felt the patient's pulse, than he expressed great apprehensions that there might be some concussion of the brain, recommending that no time should be lost in apprising his friends of the precarious situation in which he was placed. To effect this, since it was not deemed expedient to question the sufferer, even if he had been able to answer interrogatories, it became necessary to search his pockets; in which they found a purse, well stored with gold, two or three trifling articles, and a pocket-book, carefully tied up, but nothing that might indicate his name or rank, or afford any clue to the meaning of the green uniform, or the silver cross and greyhound. Such being the case, it was held excusable to open the pocket-book, which, however, did not furnish the information required; for, although it contained a great variety of letters, they were all written in an unknown cipher, with no other superscription than a number.

“Some mystery appears to attach to this unfortunate gentleman,” observed the surgeon to Mr. Shelton: “and unless, when he recovers his faculties, he can clear it up to your entire satisfaction, I should recommend you to disburthen yourself of him as quickly as may be, for these are most perilous times; rumours are already afloat to the disparagement of Hales Court and its inmates, and we, who live in the West, and recollect the bloody doings of Jeffreys and Kirke, after Monmouth’s rebellion, cannot be too cautious as to whom we receive into our dwellings.”

“I thank you for your admonition,” replied the party thus addressed; “it is our determination to hold ourselves carefully aloof from all political or religious proceedings that might implicate us in the present crisis, but we cannot be deaf to the claims of common humanity, nor shall it ever be said that the gates of Hales Court were shut against the innocent victims of misfortune.”

“But if they be not innocent in the Argus eyes of Government, it may be madness and

self-destruction to harbour them even for an instant. This man may be a proclaimed traitor. Recollect Mrs. Gaunt—recollect Lady Lisle.”

“Never can we forget their barbarous execution!” exclaimed Father Bartholomew indignantly—“neither as men and Christians can we cease to hold in remembrance that the good Samaritan asked no questions of the fainting traveller, but, looking upon him as his neighbour, poured oil and wine into his wounds, and made provision for his future comfort.”

“Neither do I see why we should draw any uncharitable conclusions of this unfortunate gentleman,” said Agatha. “He is a fellow-creature, and he needs our assistance only the more for being a stranger in this part of the country.”

“Mystery, Miss Shelton, may well justify suspicion; but follow your own course—follow your own course, and I will pursue mine. I will send such medicines as his case demands, and will revisit him in the morning.”—With

these words, and after having given a few hasty instructions as to the mode of treating the sufferer, the surgeon withdrew, not sorry apparently to escape from a patient, whose ambiguous character had already filled him with apprehensions and misgivings.

When the wounded man again recovered his faculties, he stared around him with a bewilderment that for some moments deprived him of speech ; but, after a seeming effort at recollection, he exclaimed, in nearly the same words as he had before uttered—"Where is Harry Sidney ? where is Herbert ? have they escaped ? Then I care for nothing."

"You are in the hands of friends," said Father Bartholomew, gazing at him with a benignant and assuring smile, "but you have received a perilous shock ; you must not speak ; you must not agitate yourself ; swallow this opiate, and in the morning, when you will be better able to bear and to understand the communication, I will relate to you all that has occurred, and tell you where you are."

The stranger cast a glance at the Romish garb of the priest, and a momentary flash of suspicion darkened the expression of his features; but as he fixed his eyes upon the benign countenance of his venerable companion, his distrust passed away as rapidly as it had been engendered. There is a silent intercommunion of the spirit among generous and kindred souls which carries to each a conviction of mutual truth with an effect more rapid and electrical than the fabled touch of Ithuriel's spear. With such an assurance had the heart of the invalid been penetrated, for his face suddenly reflected the benevolent smile of his companion, and merely exclaiming, "I am satisfied and I obey," he swallowed the proffered draught, and again laid himself down, sinking soon after into a doze which, though at first perturbed, and broken by sighs and exclamations, eventually subsided into a heavy continued sleep, that lasted through the night. The priest having stationed himself in an easy chair, alternately watched and dozed by his

side, until at an early hour in the morning, his patient starting up, demanded in a voice of recovered strength, but still with a look of amazement and agitation, "Where am I? Is this a prison? and why do I find a Romish priest watching by my side?"

"Be composed," said the Father, gently replacing his companion in a recumbent posture, "you have nothing to apprehend, unless from agitation and an over-exertion of your strength. We are friends, and will watch over you carefully until you are in a condition to pursue your journey, in making you which solemn assurance I am fully warranted by my noble-minded kinsman in whose house you have become an unexpected, but not the less welcome guest. Listen, and you shall learn where you are, and why you were conveyed hither." He then related the accident by which the stranger had been thrown from his horse and stunned in Goathurst wood, and the circumstance that had enabled Agatha and Edith to get him immediately conveyed to Hales Court.

“Ha! am I then at Hales Court? This explains your Roman robes. What an unexpected, what a singular chance, that I should be received and succoured *here!* *Here* at Hales Court! I am grateful, truly grateful for your friendly offices; but alas, good father! had you known who, and what I am, I suspect that I should scarcely have experienced so hospitable a reception.”

“What right have you to imagine this? Were our gates ever known to be closed against the weary wayfarer? has our succour ever been denied to those whose need of it was so urgent and imperative as yours?”

“Never, never, as I most firmly believe, if I may judge of your kindness to others by that which I have myself experienced; and yet cullumny has not spared even the benevolent family of the Sheltons.”

“In this respect,” said the Father crossing his hands upon his bosom, and bowing his head meekly, “we can only say, God’s will be done! and after all if we have nothing worse

to suffer than the endurance of unmerited obloquy and hatred, we may well possess our souls in patience."

"You can hardly deny that some of your persuasion have afforded good grounds for this hostile feeling."

"Towards themselves they may, but not towards us, not towards the bulk of their fellow Catholics, unless the exception is to form the rule, and a whole community are to be branded for the crimes of a few fanatics, or knaves, whom they themselves stigmatize and disown; were we to reciprocate this injustice, and visit upon our innocent Protestant brethren the offences of their individual devotees and felons, would they not loudly exclaim against a wrong so flagrant and insulting? God forbid that we should ever cease to respect and love them! God forbid that our judgments should ever be perverted, or our hearts be hardened by so self-punishing a bigotry!"

"Forgive me, father, if I confess myself somewhat surprised at the generosity of such

sentiments, emanating as they do from a Romish Priest."

"Most freely do I pardon the surprise that springs from ignorance. You have only known us from the libels and lampoons that poison the rank hotbed of political and religious hatred, or your personal acquaintance with our order has been confined to the very worst of its members, and you have found too much pleasure in your prejudice to make any sincere attempts at disproving it. I shall be well repaid for my good offices if they induce you to think more charitably hereafter of the community to which I belong."

"I am incapable of ingratitude; never can I forget my preservers, the generous, benevolent, and truly christian inmates of Hales Court! and yet I repeat, you know me not, you know me not, or instead of succour and hospitality you might perhaps view me with aversion."

"Let us then *not* know you, although I am unaware of any disclosure you could make

potent enough to cancel your claims on our protection and assistance; and as to hatred of an afflicted and helpless fellow creature, it is a feeling that can scarcely find entrance at Hales Court. If you have any such secret, divulge it not; enough for us that we have done our duty, that we have obeyed the Gospel precept, you were a stranger, and we have taken you in."

"And I should be a wretch indeed not to acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the delicate generosity of your sentiments, and the humanity of your conduct. But where are my fair preservers, where are the compassionate ladies to whose prompt interference I am more immediately indebted for deliverance from the perils of the storm, to the fury of which I fear they must have been exposed in their exertions to save me? Heaven grant that they may have sustained no injury! But may I not see them, to express my feelings, to pour forth my heartfelt acknowledgments?"

"Not now: for the present it must suffice you to know that they are well, although one

of them, a most delicate and nervous girl, was little fitted for braving such a strife of the elements. You are not equal to any fresh interview ; indeed I have already allowed you to talk too much and too eagerly. Your exhausted looks do not warrant this liberty, and still less does your pulse, which indicates the approach, if not the actual presence of high and dangerous fever. Of the gentlemen whose names you mentioned, and respecting whose fate you so anxiously inquired, we know and wish to know nothing whatever : for yourself you are with friends who will shield and shelter you. Let this assurance bring that composure to your mind of which it has so much need, and that you may not be tempted to any farther colloquy I will withdraw myself until the arrival of the Surgeon who promised us an early visit."

So saying he retired, and remained absent from the apartment until the medical practitioner made his appearance, which, however, was delayed considerably beyond the promised hour.

After the latter had continued some time with his patient, he hastily quitted the sick room, and demanded an immediate private interview with the Master of the mansion.

“ Mr. Shelton !” he exclaimed, on being closeted with that gentleman,—“ I fear you have got a troublesome, and perhaps a perilous guest within your gates, nor will his situation warrant any very early removal, unless we put his life in jeopardy, for although I have bled him copiously, there is too much reason to apprehend that he must undergo a severe, perhaps a fatal attack of brain fever. The inconvenience to which this might subject you, is, however, of trivial import compared to the fearful responsibility of harbouring a suspicious character,—one who, as I have already forewarned you, may be a proclaimed enemy of the Government, or engaged in traitorous machinations.”

“ Have you then observed any thing to confirm your first suspicions upon this subject ?”

“ Yes, more than I would care to repeat to

any breathing soul except yourself. When I explained the impunctuality of my visit by stating that I had been suddenly summoned to Sutton Mallet to attend some newly arrived troopers, one of whom had been kicked by a horse, your guest started up in his bed, exclaiming: ‘Ha! have they sent troopers in pursuit? Of whom are they in search? Harry and Herbert have escaped. Let it not be known, I implore you, that any stranger has been seen in these parts. Surely they will not visit Hales Court! But it is immaterial—I will quit it instantly—I feel quite well now—have they found my horse? I will resume my journey forthwith.’ With these words he sank back again upon his pillow from exhaustion, and when I assured him that he would be unable to quit his bed for some days, perhaps weeks, and that it might be right to apprise his parents, if he had any, of his precarious plight, he ejaculated,—‘What! would you have me implicate my father! expose his estates to forfeiture, and it may be, bring his

venerable head to the scaffold! Begone, Sir, you have mistaken your man,—you know not to whom you are talking.’ From his wild and incoherent manner, I concluded that the brain-fever might already have begun to exert its influence; and availing myself therefore of his last remark, I replied that I had not indeed the honour of knowing him, but that if he would favour me with his name I would myself communicate his situation to his friends, since he was himself little in a condition to write.”

“And has he divulged it?” inquired Mr. Shelton with a look of considerable anxiety.

“No, indeed, his features assumed a sarcastic smile as he exclaimed,—‘Oh ho! Sir, are you there? have I found you out? I am in your power—I feel that I cannot stir—you may surrender me to the troopers—you may immure me in a dungeon; but you do not, you cannot know me, and ere my tongue shall reveal my name, I would pluck it out, and trample on it with my heel!’”

“This is strange, it must be confessed; but

may not these be the wanderings of incipient delirium, rather than the self-betrays of conscious guilt ?”

“ They may partake in some degree of both: if there be a single particle of the latter, it falls not within the scope of my profession, and I must therefore decline any farther visits to a patient of so equivocal and perilous a character. It is my business to save other people’s lives, not to jeopardize my own ; and I have seen, since Monmouth’s affair, too many heads and quarters nailed against door-posts, to think it necessary that their number should be increased, particularly at my expense. Father Bartholomew, with such instructions as I shall give him, will be quite competent to take charge of the invalid, should you determine on retaining him at Hales Court ; but if you follow my advice, you will immediately apprize the magistrates of what has happened, and let this mysterious personage be sent to some place of security, until he can give a satisfactory account of himself.”

“How, Sir!” cried Mr. Shelton indignantly — “remove the unfortunate man in his present critical and suffering state! Consign an innocent person, for such he may still prove, to the inquisition of magistrates, and the custody of a gaoler! Perish the thought! I would sooner give up the heart from my bosom than commit such an act of barbarity. The country is in a state of profound peace—I am not bound to conclude that there are traitors abroad, still less that this gentleman is one of them, or an offender of any sort. He may have valid reasons for concealing his name, and my having discharged towards him the common duties of humanity, which the merest outcast would equally have received at my hands, gives me no right to pry into his secrets.”

“You will follow your own course, Mr. Shelton, and I shall pursue mine. To Hales Court I return no more while it gives harbour to this mysterious inmate.”

“Be it so, and I trust our assiduity may compensate to the patient for the want of your

better skill; but as he has expressed a wish, perhaps a very innocent one, that his abode here should remain as much as possible unknown, you would much oblige me by complying with his request."

"On this you may depend. I shall be silent for my own sake, as well as yours and his."

The timid surgeon hastily withdrew, and Mr. Shelton, who, although he resolutely obeyed the dictates of his own humane heart, was by no means without apprehension that his guest might involve him in some perilous responsibility, went to communicate to Father Bartholomew all that he had heard, and to consult with him as to the most prudent course that it might become them to adopt.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Why, now you flatter.”

“ I never understood the word. Were you no king, and free from these moods, should I choose a companion for wit and pleasure, it should be you ; or for honesty to interchange my bosom with, it should be you ; or wisdom to give me counsel, I would pick out you. Now I have spoke.”

A King and No King.

WE return to Walter Colyton, whom we left knocking at the door of the fair Incognita's house in St. James's Square, and who was rather embarrassed, when it was opened by a servant in a rich livery, as to the party for whom he should inquire, since he deemed it hardly decorous to give a literal obedience to his instructions by simply asking for Catherine.

Before he entered, therefore, he demanded to whom the house belonged, when the man replied that it was the mansion of the Countess of Dorchester. Walter knew enough of Court history to be aware that this lady bore the name of Catherine, that she was the daughter of the celebrated Sir Charles Sedley, and the mistress of the King, who had bestowed upon her the title by which she was now known, as well as the sumptuous mansion in which she resided. From her Christian name, as well as from the eccentricity, boldness, wit, or at least the flippant sprightliness by which public report had characterized the Countess of Dorchester, her present visitant could not doubt her identity with his fair unknown of Westbury; and although he was rather flurried at the thought of an interview with a lady not less eminent from her station, than famed for the unsparing poignancy of her satirical powers, he was at the same time sufficiently a man of the world to recollect that her influence and favour might prove infinitely more effectual than his own merits in pushing

his fortunes, and thus accelerating the great object of his heart, his union with Hetty. So rapidly do thoughts evolve in which our feelings and interests are deeply concerned, that he had time to consider all this as he ascended the stairs, and to determine on cultivating, to the best of his ability, an acquaintance that might prove not less beneficial than that which he had so auspiciously commenced with the Earl of Sunderland. Powdered lacqueys habited in splendid liveries preceded him to the landing-place, where he was committed to the Groom of the Chambers, who received his name, and ushered him into a gorgeously furnished drawing-room, within which he beheld the Countess reclining upon a sofa, while Mrs. Morlay was reading, either to her, or to a girl who sate upon an ottoman by her side.

The girl was Lady Catherine Darnley, the Countess's daughter, by the King, or by Colonel Graham, if we may rather believe the scandalous chronicles of the day. Mrs. Morlay, the same who had attended the Countess at West-

bury, was a companion, or to speak more plainly, a toad-eater, who at once largely served her own interested purposes, and contrived to ingratiate herself with her patroness, by concealing her servility and adulation beneath a flimsy veil of candour and independence. From direct adulation the quick-witted, penetrative Catherine Sedley would have revolted ; but so treacherous is the self-love, even of the keenest intellects, that they are reconciled to the most fulsome compliment if it be rendered in the smallest degree oblique, and administered with the minutest portion of tact and discernment. Unless when a fool is to be propitiated, flattery, to be successful, requires more talent than is generally imagined. Where it is palpable, it is felt as an insult to the understanding, but few are insensible to the homage that wears the plausible disguise of a sincere friendship or involuntary admiration. Of this fact Mrs. Morlay was aware, and having just art enough to conceal her art, she contrived, although an ignorant weak-minded woman, to obtain an ascendancy

over the stronger intellect of Catherine Sedley ; nay, even to persuade her that she was her disinterested friend, and ventured to tell her truths which no one else would presume to utter. These truths indeed were never of an unpalatable nature ; they were only wheedling blandishments, wearing always a mask of free, and sometimes of indignant rebuke, and were thus admirably adapted to cajole her patroness, who was at once gratified by the cause of her friend's apparent anger, and the frank honesty that it seemed to evince.

The girl having left the room, accompanied by a female attendant, as Walter entered, he looked at the Countess, and a single glance convinced him of her identity with his fair acquaintance of Westbury, as well as of the surprising improvement in her appearance, effected by a change from the plain travelling dress she had then worn, to a magnificent *robe à la Sultane* and jewelled turban, which accorded not less happily with her figure than with the oriental character of the chamber, hung as it was with

costly mirrors and draperies in the Turkish fashion. Her eyes, assisted perhaps by the effect of rouge, seemed even brighter than before, while she exhibited a voluptuous boldness in her looks and attitude such as he had not previously remarked.

“*Eccolo!*” she exclaimed as Walter entered the apartment, “there he is, I protest—our reputed robber, our Don Guzman, or rather our Don Quixote de la Mancha, who came to the relief of the distressed damsels! *Meglio tardi che mai*, Captain Colyton; you see I have not forgotten your name, but neither have I forgotten my sex, and still less my presumed attractions, and I must therefore put your gallantry or your invention to the test, by demanding the cause of this long delay in your appearance.”

“I should have sooner done myself the honour of resuming my acquaintance with your Ladyship—”

“Tush, man!” interposed the Countess, who was at times half disposed to be ashamed of her

ignoble nobility, "you had no previous acquaintance with my Ladyship; you only knew me as Catherine. I was returning from the Bath when we encountered so strangely at Westbury, and I always travel *incognita* to avoid the impertinence of the *mobile*, who in these disaffected times love to show disrespect to every thing that appertains to the Court, as I do, *Helas pour moi !*"

"Nay, nay, I cannot allow that to pass," said the obsequious Mrs. Morlay; "your only motive for concealment upon these occasions is your humility, an indisposition to assert, as you ought to do, your high rank and station. You know that all the women are dying with envy of you, and so you go about in disguise to avoid giving them pain. This is a great weakness, and I feel it my duty to tell you of it."

"If her Ladyship wished to be equally considerate towards our sex," said Walter, "she would always wear a veil; and would she spare, both to men and women, a feeling of their inferiority, she must silence her own wit."

“ Very true, very true,” cried Mrs. Morlay ; “ the attempt, you see, is quite ridiculous ; it looks, in fact, like affectation, and so I have told her a hundred times, for I am a plain-spoken body, and always like to say my say openly, however *others* may fawn and flatter.”

“ I hope the word *others* which you pronounced so significantly was not meant for Captain Colyton,” said the Countess ; “ for I can assure him that he might have paid me a much more acceptable compliment by answering my first question, and explaining why he did not sooner present himself in St. James’s Square.”

“ I felt a delicacy in doing so, until the expected remittance from my father enabled me to return the loan with which your Ladyship so kindly favoured me,” said Walter, placing the amount upon the table, enveloped in scented paper.

“ Punctual as a goldsmith !” cried Catherine. “ Had I lent money to Sir Josiah Child, I could not have placed it in securer hands, although he might not have returned it in a perfumed packet. You have paid yourself but

an ill compliment, Captain Colyton, and me a still poorer one, by imagining that I valued this trifle more than the pleasure of seeing you, or the recollection of the service, albeit an involuntary one, which you conferred upon me at Westbury. Morlay, *mia cara!* you are always twitting me with my carelessness in money matters. Ought I not to count out these guineas and see that none be clipped? nay, ought I not, like a true Shylock in petticoats, to exact good interest for the use?"

"This is talking like a rattling madcap as you are! I only object to your lavishing your money in charity, to your never passing a deserving object without drawing your purse-strings, while you frequently deny yourself those little luxuries and elegancies which are so congenial to your taste, and to which you are so fully entitled by your high station. This being one of your greatest foibles, I do not hesitate to denounce it, even at the risk of offending you, and in the presence of Captain Colyton."

"So far as externals are concerned, and put-

ting aside every thing that has reference to the heart, I do not see what pomps or gratifications I have denied myself," said the Countess, throwing a triumphant glance at the stately apartment, and at her own richly decorated figure, reflected by the long mirrors.

"And her Ladyship's taste must be fastidious indeed," observed Walter, "to discover a single defect, or even want in her establishment, if I may judge by this exquisitely adorned saloon."

"But it is always pleasant," resumed the pertinacious Mrs. Morlay, "to save one's money instead of wasting it upon objects and institutions; to have a little bank in the house, if it be only to pay gaming debts, for want of which economy and forethought, as your Ladyship must confess, you have often been exposed to very vexatious embarrassments. To be sure, you are so ridiculously sensitive, so scrupulous, so conscientious upon this point! That is another of your great failings; really one would suppose you were a Puritan.—Ay, ay, you may

shake your head and frown, I care not for it, not I ; I *will* speak my mind, and if I am not to be allowed this privilege of a true friend, I care not how soon I leave you. Why, there's Lady Ossory, and Lady Betty Camden, and the Duchess of Grafton, and half a score others, owe hundreds of card money to their friends. Nay the Queen herself will sometimes talk to the people, in her pretty broken English, of the pleasant party they had together the night before, and quite forget to pay what she lost to them ; they do say the same thing of the Lady Anne, and Prince George ; and as to lady Sunderland, she is not only the worst pay-mistress in the world, but cheats besides."

" And is it in either of these honourable qualifications, or in both, that you wish me to imitate her Ladyship ? I should despise myself for ever if I resembled that woman in one single point."

The Countess looked offended, for she detested Lady Sunderland ; and her companion, afraid that she had overshot the mark, eagerly

exclaimed—" Imitate *her* ! you cannot suppose that I meant any thing so preposterous. That horrid woman is my aversion. Besides, it is well known that her intrigues are not all of a political nature. I presume that you are not acquainted with her, Captain Colyton ?"

" I have had the honour of an introduction to her since my arrival in London."

" An acquaintance," said the Countess with an arch smile, " which you will doubtless cultivate, after the character my friend Morlay has just given her ; but remember that I have a prior claim to you ; you have put a ring upon my finger in presence of his Worship Balaam Hickman, the Mayor of Westbury ; you are my affianced adorer, and if after this, you transfer your devoirs from one Countess to another, and exchange Catherine Sedley for Anne Digby, now Lady Sunderland, I will proclaim you a false Cavalier, summon forthwith a *Cour d'Amour*, and cite you in the name of the blind Deity to answer for a blindness equal to his own."

This was not a very delicate speech, but feminine refinement was not the characteristic of the age, and still less of Catherine Sedley, who in the exuberance of her spirits, or in her determination to be sprightly, was not seldom betrayed into some degree of coarseness. Walter replied in that tone of inflated gallantry which then formed the staple of polite conversation, and which, being expressly adapted to the taste of his auditress, occasioned her to resume the sparkling vivacity, not always undebased by flippancy and inelegant attempts at humour, that had marked her demeanour at Westbury. On the first approach of her visitant she had thrown herself upon the sofa in a lounging attitude, and assumed a languor and lassitude of manner which were in accordance with the prevailing fashion, and considered moreover an appropriate demeanour in one who was habited *à la Sultane*; but as this mode was little congenial to the natural activity, both of her body and mind, it was speedily shaken off as her feelings enkindled. She was pleased with her

visitant, whose appearance had been not less improved than her own by a change of dress; and being anxious, in the true spirit of a coquette, to excite his admiration, she became every moment more and more exhilarated, talking, laughing, and rattling with a most fascinating gaiety, now assuming a bantering vein, in which the asinine Mayor of Westbury was by no means forgotten, now launching sallies of brilliant satire, and sparkling with a like success in every thing she attempted; while the parasitical Mrs. Morlay seized every little pause to throw in a dose of oblique flattery, generally, however, looking very grave at the time, and assuming a tone of reproof or admonishment. “Madeap! wild, giddy, delightful woman!” would she exclaim; “will nothing tame you? Well, it is a charming thing to have such spirits, but they are hazardous;—beware of thus indulging them;—with every body else that I have known they have been apt to end in a fit of dejection. What inexhaustible wit, but what a dangerous gift! Ah! you should check it,

you should check it, you should indeed ; for it will make you more enemies than friends. I have warned you of this a thousand times—I know you are offended with me for my importunity, but I don't care—I am determined you shall have *one* honest, plain-spoken friend about you.” These ejaculations were varied, when her patroness made any attempts at broad humour, by immoderate peals of laughter, and earnest entreaties that she would have pity upon the stitch in her side, and not kill her outright by provoking her to farther risibility, while she stigmatized the drollery that was thus absolutely irresistible, as being really an unfair weapon.

Walter, though little versed in the ways of the world, could not help suspecting that there was some little cajolery in all this ; but Catherine's vanity had so far obscured her natural shrewdness, that she was completely duped, and though she often complained to others that Mrs. Morlay was a preaching, importunate Duenna, blunt almost to rudeness, she never failed to add that she was an intelligent woman, honest

as the day, and one whom she had found on all occasions a most sincere and impartial friend ; the only one, in fact, who told her frankly of her faults.

Stimulated by the buoyant vivacity of the Countess, Walter exerted his own conversational powers to the best of his ability, and was so much delighted by his reception, and beguiled by the liveliness of their colloquy, that an hour slipped away almost imperceptibly. The striking of a superb French clock upon the mantelshelf, warning him that he had exceeded the time usually allotted for a morning visit, he prepared to take his departure, not however until he had asked permission to renew his visit ; and expressed a hope that if at any future period he should be found worthy of it, the Countess would condescend to give him the benefit of her influence in assisting his advancement in the army. In our days a man of independent feeling would hardly venture such an application on so very short an acquaintance ; but at the period of which we are writing, or at least

throughout the long reign of Charles the Second, when promotion of all sorts sprang from Court favour rather than merit, and was more especially insured by the intrigues of the royal mistresses, none were fastidious enough to hesitate about soliciting it, at the very first opportunity that presented itself. “The sooner you renew your visit, the more shall I be gratified,” exclaimed the Countess in answer to Walter’s request; “but as to my influence, may I die! if I possess more at the present moment than Titus Oates, or any other outcast of the earth. No—the monk’s frock outweighs now-a-days the lady’s petticoat; cowls and shaven heads have greater power than hoods and ringlets, and old women have superseded the young ones. I am no Catholic, and therefore I have no influence, not even enough to prevent my being ejected from my apartments in Whitehall. True, I have this gilded cage instead, but it is a cage, and alas! I am not always, as at the present moment, disposed to sing and be merry in it—*Mais n’importe*. Away with gloomy

thoughts, and hey for all frolicsome and merry fancies ! I have forgotten one thing. I had intended to ask you, until my own volubility put it out of my head, how you became acquainted with Lord Sunderland ?”

“ Partly by a letter from my father, and partly through my friend Captain Seagrave.”

“ Captain Seagrave ! Is *he* your friend ?” exclaimed the Countess in evident surprise, exchanging at the same time significant looks with Mrs. Morlay.

“ Our family became acquainted with him when he was quartered at Bridgwater, and I accidentally encountered him in London. He has conferred upon me a favour that I value still more highly ; for, on accompanying me to the Play, he pointed out to me a gentleman whose sprightly writings I have ever highly admired, and whose person I have long been anxious to know.”

“ Indeed ! who might this be ?”

“ No other than your Ladyship’s witty and celebrated father, Sir Charles Sedley.”

A cloud instantly darkened the Countess's brow, and a blush tinged her cheek as she bowed silently to Walter, and, in order to conceal her conscious embarrassment, began to play with a pet spaniel, which just then made its appearance from under the sofa. Sir Charles, with an honourable feeling that few of his contemporaries would have shared, considering himself degraded by the ennoblement of his daughter, broke off all intercourse with her when she assumed the title that confessed her ignominy, and estranged himself from the Court, a circumstance which, in spite of her apparent levity, had implanted a remorseful sense of her humiliation in the heart of Catherine, who was at once proud of her father as a distinguished author, and tenderly attached to him as a parent. Any allusion to him therefore seldom failed to produce a sudden depression of her spirits. It affected her thus in the present instance; and Walter, knowing nothing of this alienation, and receiving her altered manner as a hint that his stay had been sufficiently prolonged, hastened

his departure, declaring that he should soon avail himself of the permission to repeat his visit.

Continuing unconsciously to caress her dog, while her eyes were fixed upon the floor, and her thoughts plunged in a self-accusing retrospect, the Countess sunk rapidly into a prostration of mind, which, as usual in such cases, was commensurate with her previous elation of spirits. Her parasitical companion, knowing the cause of this melancholy mood, and being moreover aware that neither her cajoleries nor her wheedling reproaches would have power to dissipate it, prudently withdrew from the apartment; and the solitary Countess, the King's favourite, and the envy of half the court, after wandering up and down her magnificent saloon in a still increasing dejection of heart, retired at length into her boudoir, that theme of universal admiration and heart-burning among her female contemporaries, where she at length found relief in a burst of tears. As pride, however, and an elastic temperament would not permit her to

submit to these fits of melancholy without a struggle, she previously washed her eyes with a preparation of Hungary water, renewed the rouge upon her cheeks, arrayed herself in a still more splendid dress, stepped into her chair, which with its gilt mouldings and glittering followers imparted a look of grandeur even to the streets through which it passed, and paying a long round of morning visits, was everywhere complimented upon those inexhaustible spirits which to the delighted witnesses appeared to be the emanations of a natural and spontaneous vivacity, although, as she herself had declared to her friend at Westbury, they were in many instances nothing more than a vehement effort to shake off melancholy.

“Patronized by the prime minister, and in favour with the King’s mistress!” exclaimed Walter to himself as he paced with an erect head and elastic step the pavement of Pall-Mall. “Really this is a most auspicious commencement of my career!” An excusable, or at least a natural vanity fluttered about his heart at the

thought ; for although our failures be invariably assigned to the malice of fortune, few of us can divest ourselves of the impression that our success is the direct consequence of our personal merit. A reverie scarcely less sanguine and visionary than that of Alnaschar filled the head and agitated the bosom of the pedestrian as he sauntered, for he was too much absorbed to be expeditious, towards Clarendon-House. A Captain in the Guards, as all the world knew, was but a gilded pauper, whose pay would hardly purchase his appointments ; but when, in addition to the honours and emoluments of a higher rank, he should possess some of those lucrative posts which were never grudgingly showered upon the favourites of royal mistresses and ministers, he would astound his family at Weston by visiting them in all the glory of his appointments, delight the grateful Hetty Chervil by proclaiming his undiminished constancy, notwithstanding the great and sudden advancement of his fortunes, and secure his own permanent happiness, as well as hers, by making her his bride.

As to his establishment, he had hardly settled its extent, nor had he quite fixed the colour of his liveries, but upon one thing he had fully determined—his own saddle-horse, and his wife's, and the carriage horses besides, should all be grey, for he knew that Hetty preferred that colour to any other. Delusive reveries! but who that is young has not indulged similar day-dreams, and who that is old would not be happy to renew them?

It was with an elated heart that Walter knocked at the door of Clarendon House, where he found instant admission, the porter having been instructed to that effect. He was escorted with the same ceremony as before, through a file of glittering servants, to the Mercury-chamber, where after having waited some time he was joined by the illustrious master of the mansion.

“I owe you an apology,” said the Peer, after having cordially welcomed his visitant, “for disappointing you last night; but my business at Powis House detained me later than I had expected, and when I returned to Or-

monde-street, I found you had just taken your departure. However, I dare say you readily excuse my absence ; I know at least that, when I was a gay young spark like yourself, I should have desired no interruption to a *tête-à-tête* with such a truly captivating creature as my friend Helen,—not the ‘*bis rapta pellex*’ of the ancients, not the ‘*Paridis adultera conjux*,’ but a chaste and highly-gifted maiden, who only resembles her namesake in beauty and attraction. From the few words that she would allow herself to utter upon this point, for she scolded me severely for leaving you alone together, and dismissed me most unceremoniously from her door, I think I may fairly congratulate you, Captain Colyton, on the progress you have made in obtaining her favour. Yes, yes, I see clearly that Major Ravenspur is doomed to be the unsuccessful candidate, and I am really glad of it, though I know it will vex Lady Sunderland. But you must be quick, Sir, quick and bold, ‘*Audentes fortuna juvat*.’ You must push your fortune, and carry off the prize before

another rival starts up, to ensure which you must keep your designs silent—silent as the grave.”

“ Really, my Lord, I have entertained no such designs—I have never thought—”

“ Then, Sir, it is time you should begin to think. What is the meaning of this trifling and indecision? If you seek my influence that it may secure wealth and advancement, you must follow the path chalked out for you. I speak to you with frankness and sincerity, for I abhor a double face.” This was uttered in a stern dictatorial tone, and Walter, recollecting Seagrave’s cautions as to the certainty of offending the minister by any declared opposition to his wishes, was in some embarrassment what to say, when the peer continued with a more complacent look—“ Surely you were not disappointed in the lady’s attractions—you can have no reason to complain of your reception.”

“ None—none whatever,” cried Walter eager to change the subject of conversation—“ but with my entertainment after I left the house, I

have little cause to be gratified, and I have thought it my duty to lose no time in apprising your Lordship of the occurrence."

He accordingly proceeded to state the attack that had been made upon him in the fields,—a relation which he had no sooner commenced than his auditor, starting and turning suddenly pale, fixed his eyes upon the speaker and listened to him with profound attention until he had concluded, when he eagerly demanded in an almost breathless voice—

"What, what was it the villains uttered? You are sure there were two of them?"

"There was but one at first, who, as well as I could gather in the agitation of the moment, pronounced the name of Helen Audley, and swore that I should expiate her wrongs."

"Ha! said he so? I suspected it—I suspected it—and the second ruffian?"

"Called upon his companion to dispatch me, observing that even assassination was justifiable when the wrong doer was too high to be reached by other means."

“ The blood-thirsty, desperate cut-throat !” cried the Earl, walking hastily up and down the room in the greatest perturbation—“ what is our police about that such murderous wretches are suffered to be at large ? Where is Seagrave ? You were mistaken for some one else, they took you for ——”

“ Another, my Lord, beyond all doubt, but whom I cannot conjecture, being a total stranger in London.”

“ And you have not even a suspicion of the victim intended to be sacrificed in this atrocious ambuscade ?”

“ None whatever, my Lord.”

“ Are you quite sure that no name was mentioned ?”

“ I heard none, except that one of the braves called his comrade by the name of Caleb.”

“ How—Caleb ! Caleb, did you say ?—then it is clear, palpable beyond all possibility of doubt ;—where is Seagrave ? I must see him instantly. You will oblige me, Captain Colyton,

by seeking him out at his lodgings, and dispatching him hither as quickly as may be."

"With pleasure, my Lord; but before I go, may I venture to remind you of your obliging promise to present me at the Levee next Friday?"

"You have not then given information to the Police," enquired the Peer, leaving Walter's question unnoticed. "It is well—it is well—mention not the occurrence to any one, above all not to Lady Sunderland:—these foolish women are so easily frightened."

"My lips are sealed; I will not lose a moment in finding ——"

"Ha! who is that? who is there?" cried the Peer suddenly drawing his sword—"methought I heard a rattling at the closet-door."

"It is nothing, my Lord, but the bough of yonder tree driven by the wind against the blinds."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed the Earl, hastily sheathing his weapon, as if ashamed of the emotion into which he had been betrayed.

“ I had been reading about Buckingham and Felton. See what it is to be a Minister ! to have an overwrought brain, to have been sleepless all night, and to be suffering at the same time from an attack of nervous fever. Go, go ! send me Seagrave instantly, and mention nothing of what you have seen or heard. I have much need of repose, but I must first see Seagrave.”

He waved his hand impatiently ; Walter, obeying the signal, bowed, withdrew from the apartment, and hurried towards Covent Garden in search of the Captain, much musing as he went upon the singular and unaccountable agitation into which the Minister had been thrown by the relation of a circumstance apparently so incommensurate with the effect it had produced ; and marvelling more especially why he should so urgently and importunately demand an instant interview with Seagrave.

CHAPTER V.

Now all the youth of England are on fire,
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies ;
Now thrive the armourers, and honour's thought
Reigns solely in the breast of every man.

SHAKSPEARE.

RENDERING a literal obedience to Lord Sunderland's directions, not to mention the subject of their last conversation, so far at least as the attack of the bravoës was concerned, Walter contented himself with informing Seagrave, whom he luckily encountered at his lodgings, that he must hasten instantly to Clarendon House, his Lordship having most urgent occasion to see him.

“ Must—and instantly, and urgent ! ”—cried

the Captain, setting his arms a-kimbo—"Sink me, who am I? Look you, Mynheer Wouter, these words may pass muster when an officer is on duty taking orders from his superior; but you may tell the Earl of Sunderland, Baron of Wormleighton, President of the Privy Council, Principal Secretary of State, and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, that to me he is no more than simple Bob Spencer. I care not for him, nor should I if he wore a sword for every title, and methinks therefore he might send me his requests in less imperious language."

"They are his Lordship's expressions, not mine," said Walter, who saw that the Captain was under the influence of his morning potations, and disposed to give himself airs of importance upon the strength of the message from the Peer.

"*Sacre, mon cher!* I believe it, for you would better have known what is due to a gentleman and a soldier. What new business is toward, I wonder, that I must march to Picca-

dilly, in double quick time? What roysterers and swashbucklers am I now to tame? Is Sir James Hayes again to be rescued—have Culpepper and the Duke of Devonshire a second time tilted at one another's throats in the King's antichamber, or am I simply required to dispose of some vulgar desperado, with an iron sword, a tied-up wig, and a tucked-in cravat?"

“What his Lordship may require of you, I know not; but he seemed to have most cogent reasons for requesting you to be expeditious.”

“Why, then, his Secretaryship must be equally prompt in furnishing the *mercede*, the chink, the rhino, ay, and this long-promised Major's commission too, or he shall find that I am not the man to serve his present turn, and my honest bilboa shall go to sleep in its scabbard. *Peste!* Signor Gualtero, if every brave fellow were rewarded according to his deserts, I might appear in the ring, wearing a wig like a cloak, a hat like a shuttlecock, and a point lace cravat, as I rode in my own gold-mounted coach, with six Flanders mares before, and as

many French liveries behind. *Zwaarten en ponjaarten!* they had better look to it, or I shall imitate some of our discontented gallants, slip over to Frogland, ask the hook-nosed Prince for a commission, and enrol myself in the service of the Houghan-moghans."

Instead of reprehending him for this refractory mood, the manifest overflowing of his cups, Walter coaxed him into a compliance with his patron's orders, and at length had the pleasure of seeing him take his departure for Piccadilly, though not until he had blustered some little time longer, and eructed his whole store of polyglot oaths.

Our young soldier having received an intimation from the Premier, that his reception at the Levee would be more likely to be favourable if he had previously joined his troop, and were presented in a red-coat, set about the completion of his equipments with so much zeal and alacrity, that he was speedily enabled to make his appearance at the head-quarters of his regiment, then constituting a portion of the stand-

ing army, which the King had assembled upon Hounslow Heath, that they might acquire confidence in themselves, and take it from others : —“ a dangerous engine,” as the historian justly observes, “ which generally subjects the people to the Prince, and the Prince to itself.” Of his being reported fit for immediate duty, he did not entertain a doubt ; for his father, who had always intended him for the army, the only profession which he thought worthy of a gentleman, had taken care to have him instructed in all military exercises. Even had he not been personally interested in the glory of the scene, it would have been impossible for him to contemplate, without emotion, the magnificent, picturesque, and spirit-stirring prospect of the encampment, suddenly presenting itself as he caught an open view of the Heath. Arms were flashing in all directions ; the tents arranged in the form of a square, the formality of which was broken by clumps of intervening trees, shone radiant in a cloudless sun ; their surmounting streamers played gaily in the air,

while pre-eminent, above all, upon an elevated staff, floated the royal flag of England, which the wind, as if proud to be its train-bearer, held proudly extended, so that its golden blazonry sparkled and bickered in the light. Some of the troops, both horse and foot, were performing military evolutions on the heath, and the air trembled with the martial clangor of trumpets and cymbals, mingled with the neighing of rejoicing steeds, and the indistinct rolling of the drums. Walter had previously caught the sound of musketry, with occasional salvos of cannon, while yet at a distance, and in the natural ardour and impatience of youth, had, with a beating heart and eager eyes, urged his steed forwards. He now increased its speed, as if fearful of losing any portion of the show, which to those who could forget the tyrannical object for which this army was assembled, offered a brilliant and animating spectacle. Although many persons of distinction had, from the most honourable and patriotic motives, withdrawn themselves from the ranks, the

troops thus assembled comprised the flower of the English youth and chivalry of the aristocratic class, as well as of the wealthy commoners. Viewing it as the surest engine for the enforcement of despotic power, both spiritual and political, the arbitrary James, himself a practised soldier, had always entertained a marked predilection for the army. With the exception, perhaps, of a conversion to Popery, there was no more certain passport to his favour than the military profession ; hence all the aspirants for distinction or advancement hastened to enrol themselves, an example widely followed by those young and dashing possessors of wealth, who, looking upon this peace encampment as intended more for show than service, imagined they might cut a figure, display their taste or their opulence, and acquire a fashionable notoriety, without any personal risk. Many of these gentry, sparing no expense in the purchase of the most superb horses and appointments, had besides fitted up their tents with an incredible luxury and magnificence ; and indeed

the whole camp, the baggage, servants, and followers of which, almost tripled the number of the combatants, might have been supposed, both from this circumstance and the gorgeousness of its equipment, to belong rather to an Asiatic than to an European army. For one of its peculiarities, however, it would not have been easy to find a prototype. Its stationary character, and its proximity to London, had occasioned it to be surrounded, although at some little distance, with an outer line of gipsy-looking tents, booths, sheds, and stalls, picturesquely dispersed amid trees and bushes, belonging to suttlers, tavern-keepers, dealers, and chapmen, intermixed with conjurers, tumblers, rope-dancers, and mountebanks of every description ; so that the *tout ensemble* presented the singular appearance of a gay glittering camp, encircled by a market and a fair. With the besotted infatuation that marked every step of James's latter career, he had ostentatiously set up a Roman Catholic Chapel in the centre of this armament, as if for the express purpose

of offending and alienating the very soldiers, who had already, in more than one instance, testified their abhorrence of Popery, and on whom he mainly relied for the forced conversion of his subjects. Service was here daily performed with all the imposing pomp of the Romish ritual, and as Walter reached the enclosure of the tents, he saw monks, priests, and barefooted friars, passing towards the sacred building, heard the tolling of the bell, and soon afterwards could distinguish at intervals the chanting of the choir, a startling anomaly, when the hallowed sounds of piety and peace thus came upon the ear, mingled with the lively strains of military music, the rattling of musketry, and the deafening roar of cannon.

Although Lord Dover's ministerial duties prevented him from executing any military command, he had complied with the prevailing fashion, by keeping up a magnificent tent. On being admitted into it, Walter was not less struck with the incongruity, that had placed in juxtaposition, articles of the most refined

and consummate luxury, with all the sterner apparatus of war. Fierce-looking sentries, stationed at the entrance, had challenged him as he approached. Against the costly silk hangings, hung numerous Atlases and plans of different fortifications, interspersed with glittering arms and armour, disposed apparently rather with a view to picturesque effect than to purposes of utility. Swords, helmets, maps, and regimental books, were displayed upon one table, while upon another were to be seen, cards, dice, snuff-boxes, musical instruments, and knick-knacks of all sorts, huddled confusedly together. Amid all the formalities of rigorous military observance, it was manifest that good cheer was not forgotten; for in an interior division of the tent, he perceived a long table, decorated with rich plate, and sumptuously prepared for a large dinner-party, while a servant was breaking ice into large silver wine-pails. "I doubt whether Lord Feversham, our commander-in-chief," thought Walter to himself, "learned this style of encamping from his uncle,

Monsieur de Turenne ; nor do I know whether the ancient Sybarites ever engaged in hostilities ; but if they did, they could hardly display a more studied luxury in their military appointments than the modern warriors of Hounslow Heath."

Lord Dover having, in the phraseology of the day, " bowed the knee to Baal," or in other words having imitated the profitable example of Lord Sunderland and others, by becoming a convert to Popery, was attending service in the chapel at the time of Walter's arrival, but he soon made his appearance, and received his visitor with the courtesy that belonged to his character. To the great surprise of the young soldier, who expected rather to be interrogated as to his competency for military duty, almost one of the first questions put to him by his officer was the inquiry whether he were red or blue, a demand which he deemed to have reference to his uniform, and answered accordingly. Smiling at his mistake his Lordship explained, that he meant to ask whether he were a Catholic

or a Protestant, and Walter when he had declared that he was of the latter persuasion, could not help fancying that he perceived a diminished cordiality in his Lordship's manner, and indeed a reserve and indifference such as he had little expected to find in a nobleman who had always been famed for his distinguished elegance and urbanity. After a short interview he received his dismissal, and was conducted by an orderly serjeant to his proper quarters, where his brother-officers, after the very first salutations, repeated the same question that had been put to him by his noble superior. "Are you a true blue?" cried several at once—"then you are doubly welcome:" when taking him apart they quickly let him into some of the arcana of the camp, and enabled him to perceive that it was deeply imbued with a spirit of disunion and disaffection, whatever might be the external manifestations of concord and loyalty. Quickly too did he discover that it was enervated by moral corruption, most of the officers being abandoned to

gambling, drunkenness, and other dissolute habits, practices which the soldiery were by no means slow to imitate; while there were frequent squabbles and acts of insubordination from their unwillingness to render to the monks and friars, with whom the camp was infested, those marks of reverence and homage which they had been peremptorily commanded to pay by the express orders of the King.

Very few hours elapsed before Walter made a commencement of his military duties. The monarch who had been aptly characterized by Pepys as a busy man rather than a man of business, and whose profound sense of royal supremacy and prerogative persuaded him that every thing, even to the most trifling details, should emanate from himself, could hardly sleep in his bed from his anxiety to discharge these multifarious self-imposed duties. He offered the solitary instance of an English sovereign being his own First Lord of the Admiralty; and if he did not command the army in person, he chose to engross all the patronage, and to dis-

charge most of the functions that usually devolve upon the generalissimo. However deficient in the other requisites of a commander, he exhibited no lack of zeal and activity, being in camp on the following morning soon after sunrise, on which occasion Walter was obliged to turn out, that his Majesty might be received with due honours; and afterwards attended him when with four thousand horse he marched, as a piece of gallantry, into Staines meadow, for the purpose of escorting the Queen thence to the camp, where she honoured Lord Arran, one of the Catholic commanders, by dining with him in his tent. After the health of their Majesties had been separately given, the King agreeably surprised the company by filling a bumper, and drinking to the Church of England as established by law; a condescension which excited a good deal of comment in the army, and was variously interpreted according to the feelings of the relaters, some adducing it as a proof that he had not the smallest wish to supersede Protestantism, while others attributed it to a tardy

desire to conciliate, now that people talked openly of an approaching invasion from Holland. It was indeed the misfortune, or rather the fitting punishment of this rash and impolitic monarch, that as he never relaxed in his measures of tyranny except when under the influence of fear, his compulsory concessions rather served to inspire contempt than to propitiate regard, or to win confidence.

Early on the following day, Walter received a visit from Seagrave, who informed him that the corps to which he himself belonged was attached to the camp, but that through the influence of his worthy patron, Lord Sunderland, he obtained leave of absence as often, and for as long periods as he pleased. Voluntarily recurring to the of subject the night attack made by the bravoës, he declared that his Lordship had been quite irritated out of his customary self-possession by the relation of that daring outrage, believing it to have sprung from a gang of conspirators, who had leagued together to assassinate some of the leading members of the

administration, and perhaps the King himself, for the purpose of throwing every thing into disorder : a traitorous confederacy, of which some inkling had already reached the ear of government. “ The Peer knew,” added Sea-grave — “ that I was able to give the police a clue to some of these villains, which is the reason he sent for me in such haste, and *Sacre, mon cher !* it was well he did, for if I mistake not, the very scoundrels who wanted to give you a taste of bilboa and ferrara, mistaking you probably for some of our magnificoes, are already in custody. It is his Lordship’s wish that you should for the present preserve a strict silence upon all the occurrences of that night, for which he will give you a reason when he sees you at the Levee ; and by the by, I am charged by our common patron to accompany you to the Court to-morrow, where, as I understand, you are to have the honour of being presented to his Majesty. *Pardi*, Mynheer Wouter ! you are a lucky fellow ! and when you come to be a grandee, which I reckon will

presently be the case, I hope you won't forget *votre très humble serviteur*—honest Bat. Seagrave."

Walter did not feel particularly flattered by having such a gentleman usher assigned to him, as he began to think the Captain a somewhat equivocal character; but such being his Lordship's instructions, he had nothing to do but to submit, and he accordingly arrayed himself next morning in his new regimentals, and accompanied Seagrave to Whitehall.

Many circumstances combined at this juncture to diffuse gloom and suspicion through the Court, although the attendances were never known to have been so numerous, nor the appearances of fealty more unequivocal and ardent. Almost every one, with the solitary exception of the monarch himself, foresaw that a crisis, perhaps a convulsion was approaching, and in an interested and corrupt age, the great mass of the courtiers only considered how it might be best converted to their own individual advantage. Some of the more generous and dar-

ing Patriots had indeed already quitted the country, and joined the Prince of Orange, with the ultimate destination of whose extensive armaments they were well acquainted. Others, under various disguises and pretexts, and at the imminent hazard of their lives, were roaming through England, communicating with his adherents, securing new partizans, and making preparations for his reception; but there were scarcely any, whether engaged or not in these measures, who did not endeavour to conceal their machinations, their selfish indifference, or their timid irresolution, beneath a veil of the most outrageous loyalty. Never had the addresses from all parties been so fulsome, abject and crawling; never had the personal protestations of unbounded attachment and fidelity been so loud and enthusiastic, and never did an hypocrisy so palpable as to become have a laughing stock and a by-word at every private meeting, so completely succeed in hood-winking its infatuated object. The King was lulled by it into a fatal security, but this feeling was not

shared by the courtiers. None could see how or where the explosion would take place; in the event of a struggle it was impossible to say which side might predominate; the most shrewd and crafty felt the difficulty of steering between Scylla and Charybdis; spies swarmed in every corner; and hence gloom and suspicion, misgiving and mistrust, saddened almost every heart, although the countenance might wear a very different expression.

“ I tell you what, Mynheer Wouter,” whispered Seagrave to his companion, “ *tuschen u en mij*, as Hans Mundungus says—between you and me, this is but a sorry-looking crowd, compared to what I have seen in former days. Priests and soldiers, black gowns and red coats, completely hide the ladies’ hoops; so that if it were not for a feathered head here and there, and the sparkling of a diamond cross in the hair, (crosses are all the fashion,) we should hardly know there was a Countess or a Duchess in the *melée*. See how the bishops and parsons scowl at the monks and friars as they pass !

Even the shaven and cowled gentry are divided among themselves. Fathers Ellis and Marsh, and Mansuete, the Dominicans, — yonder you may see them all three whispering together — being jealous of Father Petre, and the Jesuits, and striving to get the King and Queen to themselves. Nothing but sour looks on all sides. Then there is but little play, and less dancing; no basset or hazard; no lavoltas, courantos, or French galliards; and the master of the revels is little more than a name. *Parbleu, mon camarade*, the court wore a very different aspect in old Rowley's time. I was here in this glorious gallery the very Sunday before he died, and methinks I can now see him in his black wig, lolling in a tapestry arm-chair, with a favourite spaniel on each thigh, talking and joking with his donzellas, the Portsmouth, the Cleveland, the Mazarine, and others, or listening to Cifaccio the eunuch and the famous French boy singing love songs, while Buckingham, Berkeley, Ashley, Brounker, and a score more of the merry wags and Courtiers were

surrounding a large basset table covered with gold. *Hemel ende Aarde!* before the next Sunday came round, the King was a corpse, and all the court in grief and consternation."

"Most truly then may you exclaim with the Psalmist—'I myself have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by, and lo! he was gone; I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found.'"

"*Peste, mon cher!* do you quote Scripture at Court? Well, it may do in these days, especially if your quotation have a Roman sound, but it would scarcely have passed muster in the late reign; nor will his successor excuse you for alluding to honest old Rowley as one of the ungodly, since he died a good Catholic. Ah! I have seen merry doings and laughing faces in this very apartment that is now so grave and formal, but of the beaux and belles, the wits and wags who once graced Whitehall by their splendour and beauty, or kept it in a roar by their lively sallies, some are silent and underground with poor Charley, others have grown

old, ugly, and solemn, several are abroad ; all are altered. The Duchesses of Mazarine and Portsmouth are gone to France ; the Duchess of Cleveland has turned devout and dropsical ; *la belle* Stuart, married to his Grace of Richmond, is with her husband at Versailles. *Sacre !* I believe none of the late King's mistresses are to be seen now-a-days. Moll Davis, Mistress Nelly, and one or two more of that stamp are dead, while Jennings and others are married, and metamorphosed into fat, respectable, dowdy matrons. And it has fared little better with the sparks and wags. Monmouth, whose beautiful head used to be the admiration of the ladies, had it chopped off upon Tower Hill ; his friend Argyle shared the same fate ; Buckingham, the gay and gallant, died t'other day like a dog in a miserable ale-house by Kirby Moorside ; Rochester, the witty and the dissipated, expired of old age at thirty-three ; Killigrew and Ashley, the drolls and the merry-andrews of their day, will play no more pranks, for both are lying under the cold pavement of

Westminster Abbey ; Sir George Etherege, the sparkish, the fashionable, and the débonnaire, saddened into a grave diplomatist, is gone as envoy to Ratisbon ; his friend Sir Charles Sedley, the jaunty and the polite, and once the very pink of the mode, has grown corpulent and discontented, retired from Court, and given himself up to politics and spleen ; your commander, Lord Dover, whose successes as graceful Harry Jermyn occasioned him to be called *l'homme à bonnes fortunes*, is now, as you have seen, a reserved Catholic and a profound politician. Handsome Harry Sidney is in Frogland, caballing with hook-nosed William ; my old acquaintance Don Carlos, the late King's son by Kitty Pegge, was knocked on the head at Tangiers, as were other pretty fellows of the Court ; notwithstanding which, my Lord Mountjoy, St. Alban's, and several of our bravest gallants, have flocked to the Duke of Lorraine's standard, that they may have another cut at the Infidels, by serving at the siege of Buda. Sink me, Signor Gualtero ! it is a thousand

pities that when Death presumed to thrust his skeleton skull into such a merry Court as that of Charles the Second, no one should have been able to cry out — Seize him, Topham ! as the House of Commons do to their Serjeant, and so commit the grim scarecrow to the black-hole. *De Dood en den Duivel !* a fellow should not think of all these things unless he has a bottle of claret at each elbow to drive away sorrow.”

“ Yours indeed has been rather a melancholy retrospect. It seems as if you hardly recognized a single individual that figured in the jocund days to which you have alluded.”

“ None such as they were, none such as they were ! Here comes one indeed, whom I remember the very life of the gay circle. See you yonder battered, withered, spindle-shanked beau, tricked out in the very extremity of the mode, with a Pompadour velvet coat, diamond buttons, a profusion of frogs, tags, loops, tassels, and ribbons, a full-bottomed wig, and a point lace cravat hanging down to his waist ? That is the Count de Grammont, who has been sent over by

Louis to compliment the King on the birth of the Prince of Wales. The Frenchman has as many bows and congées, and grins and grimaces as ever; he presents his snuff-box as debonairly, and makes love as fluently, perhaps as wittily, as he was wont; but he is not listened to as formerly, for the wrinkled monkey has become villainous old in the face, and cannot carry his years without stooping in the shoulder. *Sacre, mon cher!*" concluded the Captain, drawing up his figure, which was really a fine one, "is it not a dismal shame and scandal that a handsome, stout, well-built fellow should ever get withered and decrepit?"

"Time has scarcely touched you as yet, and by your fierce look and attitude you seem determined to scare him from approaching."

"Botches on the old scythe-bearing gaffer! he has a good memory, knows where and when to call, and will take no denial. For the present indeed—Ah, Mynheer Dyckvelt — *ik ben zeer blyde—Peste!* I have forgotten my Dutch, but I am right glad to meet you again at Court—

Au revoir ! au revoir ! That is Dyckvelt, who comes from the Hague ostensibly on the same errand as De Grammont ; but, as we rather suspect, to see how the land lies on this side, and to canvass for the P— of O——; you take me ! He associates with all the discontented, and in one respect has taken no bad measure of the English character, for he holds open house, keeps a table like a Bishop's, and makes his guests drunk with French wines. In this respect he beats both Zulestein and Barillon."

They had now reached the throng of the courtiers where Seagrave could no longer continue to enact the Cicerone, or rather the Master of the Ceremonies to his companion; but he still won his way forward without much ceremony, receiving, to Walter's great surprise, a bow or a few words of recognition, from several of the most distinguished individuals, until they gained the circle immediately surrounding the monarch, within which he recognized Lord Sunderland playing with two of the King's spaniels, whom he patted and caressed, called them by

their names of Quick and Mumper, and fed them with cake from his waistcoat pocket. James, who shared his late brother's fondness for these animals, was evidently pleased by an artifice that was merely put in practice to win his favour, "Love me, love my dog. Ah! there is some truth, I see, in that adage," he exclaimed as the spaniels stood on their hind legs, begging to the minister with their fore-paws. "You are quite a favourite with my little pets."

"Yes, my liege, while my cake holds out," replied Sunderland, who sometimes carried his hypocrisy so far as to sneer at the cupidity and selfishness of others,—“the cunning rogues are quite courtiers—see how abjectly they beg, and how ready they are to snatch every morsel out of one another's mouth.”

"Whatever they may be towards one another," said the Monarch, "they are at least faithful to their master, and attached to the hand that feeds them. Can every courtier say as much?"

“I should trust so—I should hope so—he must be an ungrateful wretch if he cannot,” replied Sunderland, and he hastened to change the conversation, for he liked not the significant looks that some of the bystanders exchanged with each other.

The Lord Chamberlain now brought up several gentlemen to be presented, upon each of whom his Majesty bestowed a few sentences of conversation, from the general tenor of which it might have been concluded that the state of the country, menaced at it was by invasion from without, and by disaffection within, did not occupy the smallest share of his attention; while he betrayed the most lively interest in any trifle of foreign politics, or of domestic occurrence, that bore a reference, however remote, to his own narrow and bigoted notions in religious matters. Of one who had a brother at the siege of Buda, he enquired the particulars of some recent battle with the Turk, and evinced great joy when told that several thousands of the unbelievers had been cut to pieces,

expressing a fervent hope that he should live to see the day when all Europe would be united in a new crusade for the extermination of the Infidels. Another who had brought dispatches from Rome was received with a particular graciousness, because he conveyed assurances of the Pope's amicable disposition, and gave a favourable account of the negociation in the affair of the Concordat. A Catholic country gentleman was listened to with indifference or impatience while he rendered an account of some tumultuous proceedings of a Protestant mob in his neighbourhood ; but when he added that he had, notwithstanding, just opened a Popish chapel, his royal auditor instantly became all ear, demanding how many it would hold, who were the priests, whether it were well attended, &c. When Lord Falkland, who had just acquired a large fortune by fishing up bullion out of a Spanish galleon, sunk near the Island of Jamaica, presented himself, the King, familiarly addressing him as his old friend Tony Cary, congratulated him on his good luck, but could

not help adding, that as this wealth was a God-send, he was bound to appropriate a portion of it to the service of Heaven by a liberal donation to the society of the Propagandists, or by the construction of a chapel. Allusion being made to the recent death of Bishop Bunyan, as the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" was then nick-named, James took occasion to observe that it was the Royal Declaration for liberty of conscience that had enabled him to build his meeting-house at Bedford and acquire so many followers, a fact which he seemed to dwell upon with some complacency as an evidence of his own spirit of Toleration. He even paid several compliments to the deceased, adding with a concluding touch of fanaticism, though partly perhaps to vex some of the bishops who were listening, that if he had been of the *right faith* he might at that moment have been in a state of beatitude.

Almost the only subject unconnected with religion which seemed to interest him was that of hunting, an amusement to which he had al-

ways been passionately addicted, and on which he dilated with evident pleasure when he came in contact with any well-known sporting character. Even the camp at Hounslow, upon which he at once relied as a security, while he delighted in it as a hobby-horse, seemed to be forgotten as he listened to the details of any celebrated stag or fox-chase, although this and every thing else was instantly driven from his mind whenever his paramount bigotry could seize an opportunity of recovering its ascendancy. Father Petre was almost constantly at his right-hand, quite unable to conceal his vanity and arrogance as the monarch conversed or whispered with him apart, while the train of courtiers kept at a respectful distance. Even Sunderland, the favourite and factotum, stood no chance of gaining the royal ear after it had been once engaged by the Jesuit. His Lordship had recognized and spoken to Walter, requesting him to wait till the presentations should be over, when his Majesty would have more time to bestow upon him than if he took

his turn amid the throng, a delay to which his *protégé* offered not the smallest objection, as he was highly gratified by the novel scene before him. At the play he had only seen the King imperfectly, but he had now full opportunity to observe that he was something above the middle stature, well shaped, very nervous and strong, fair complexioned, stiff and constrained, not to say ungracious, in his carriage. His countenance, of which the character was rather plodding and sensual than intellectual, was moulded by an habitual courtesy into an engaging expression ; but when this ceased, his present observer thought that he could discover, in the strongly marked lines of his face, traits of unhappiness, as well as of a sullen obstinacy. Punctilious in the proper ceremonials of his rank, he was nevertheless generally affable and plain spoken in his familiar discourse, delivering himself slowly and distinctly on account of a slight impediment in his speech. In his conversation there seemed to be no marks of genius or sensibility, still less of wit, his mode of speech im-

plying that he studied the useful rather than the ornamental. For a moment, he was offended by something that had been spoken, and Walter, noticing the stern unrelenting expression that immediately darkened his features, was furnished with a clue to the violence and implacability that had characterized his reign.

Seagrave having slipped away when he had reached the royal circle, the young soldier waited patiently for the promised signal from Lord Sunderland. It was given at length, the minister took his hand, led him forward, and presented him as Captain Colyton of the Dragoon Guards, the son of Jaspar Colyton of Bridgwater

“Of Bridgwater!” repeated the King, and a cloud passed over his brow ; for he had never forgiven that town its enthusiastic reception of the pretender Monmouth.

“Yes, your Majesty,” whispered Sunderland, “but free from all taint or suspicion ; none of his family ever wore a white favour, and he himself desires nothing more ardently than to have

an opportunity of distinguishing himself in your Majesty's service."

"Jaspar Colyton!" exclaimed the King musingly; "methinks I have some faint recollection of that name."

"When your Majesty was serving under M. de Turenne against the army of the Prince de Condé," said Walter, "my father had the honour to be a Captain in the same squadron."

"What! when the Spaniards sate down before Arras? That was my third campaign, and must have been in the year fifty-four. Jaspar Colyton! I remember him now. We were then both youngsters together:—the Captain was called the handsome English cavalier; ay, and a right merry one he was, who sang a good song, made love and war with equal ardour, and was never known to refuse the bottle. Are you the son of that jocund gentleman, and is he still alive?"

Walter answered in the affirmative, replying subsequently to several questions that were put to him touching his father's circumstances, age,

health, &c. ; when James, who loved to revert to his youthful campaigns, and whose memory was extremely retentive, exclaimed—

“ Although it is so many years ago, I well recollect that I was riding one night, with your father and others, to visit the guard, when, as we reached the height of Mouchy, we were witnesses to a frightful catastrophe that happened on the plain towards Lens. An entire regiment of the enemy’s cavalry were coming from Douay, each man having behind him a fifty pound bag of gunpowder for the supply of their camp, accompanied by about fourscore horses laden with hand grenades. A drunken trooper in the rear choosing to smoke a pipe, his officer took it from him, and beat him with his sword, when the fellow discharged his pistol at him, which set fire to the lieutenant’s bag, and so communicating from one to the other, nearly the whole of that regiment were miserably blown up and destroyed.”

“ I have often heard my father mention the occurrence,” said Walter, “ as well as your Ma-

jesty's kindness to some of the scorched and wounded survivors that were brought in."

"It was not a thing to escape any man's memory," resumed the Monarch, "nor shall I ever forget the beautiful appearance of our troops as they marched down one dark stormy night to attack the lines before Arras. As soon as they had formed for battle, they suddenly discovered their lighted matches, which kindling and blazing by reason of the wind, and throwing out sparkles of fire as the musqueteers happened to shog against each other, made a glorious show of our advancing army, while all around them was a pitchy darkness. I have often too laughed with your merry father—but that must have been afterwards, towards fifty-seven, when we served together before Cambray, at the Spanish mode of warfare. Seeing we could easily have captured a large convoy of the enemy, I galloped up to the Prince de Ligne to apprise him of it, but he durst not attack without orders from Don John or the Marquis of Caracena, both of whom were enjoying their

afternoon's siesta, and he was afraid to wake them, so that we were fain to let a most valuable prize slip through our fingers, in order that our drowsy commanders might finish their nap."

His Majesty, who in early life had much distinguished himself as a soldier, and loved to "fight all his battles o'er again," might have finished the campaign, but that Father Petre intimated he had a communication to make respecting a letter just put into his hands, when he bowed graciously to Walter, and immediately withdrew with the Jesuit.

"Well, my young friend!" said Sunderland as he retired, "are you satisfied with your reception? It has indeed been a most distinguished one, and you may hold yourself highly honoured. Our royal master is slow to promise favour, but not to bestow it where his regard has once been obtained. In almost every respect he is the reverse of the late King, as indeed is sufficiently manifest from the totally altered appearance of the court, where all is now propriety

and decorum, and no royal mistresses, covered with diamonds, are allowed to offend public decency. His present Majesty, profoundly imbued with a sense of religion, is strict in all its observances; he is moreover extremely temperate, never guilty of profane swearing or loose discourse, although, as you have seen, sufficiently courteous and familiar; and so condescending, that when saluted by the humblest individual in the streets, he never fails to take off his hat. Such is his economy, that there are at this moment, without any additional taxes, six hundred thousand pounds in the exchequer, which in the late reign was once bankrupt, and always in debt; no unimportant circumstance if there be any truth in the received maxim that *Thesaurus regis est vinculum pacis et bellorum nervi*. And so extraordinary are the King's exactness and diligence, that although he superintends all the affairs of the state, both civil and military, I have reason to know that he has for many years kept a voluminous diary, in which he regularly enters with his own hand every transac-

tion of the times. He is thought to have been occasionally unsparing towards his enemies, but he was never known to desert a friend ; and if we survey him in private life, we shall find him sincere and open in himself, abhorring duplicity in others, firm in all his attachments, an affectionate and obedient brother, a fond husband, and an indulgent father."

Though this portrait, as far as it went, was impartial, its omissions rendered it strikingly imperfect. To complete the picture, the minister should have added that his royal master was arbitrary, choleric, and obstinate ; at once weak and severe, uxorious and inconstant ; infatuated with a vain notion of the divine right of kings, and the duty of passive obedience in subjects ; and that his religion, so far from its being an ennobling and purifying principle, emasculated instead of invigorating his understanding, and hardened instead of mollifying his heart, until it degenerated into a blind and reckless bigotry, which, utterly obscuring all his better qualities, plunged him at length into irretrievable ruin.

It was not, however, Walter's business to contravene any portion of Sunderland's encomium, which had not been uttered in any sincerity of heart, but for the purpose of its being overheard by some of the busy listeners, who always dogged the minister's footsteps. Our young soldier, indeed, felt infinitely too much flattered by his reception to think of arraying his Majesty's failings against his virtues, and therefore rendered a willing acquiescence to the panegyric that had just been pronounced.

Sunderland then alluded slightly to the message he had sent by Seagrave respecting the bravoës, and reverting immediately to Mrs. Audley, declared that from a recent interview he had had with that lady, he was convinced Walter had made a decided impression upon her heart, urging him to press his suit without a moment's delay; but, above all, to be silent upon the subject; lest he should be supplanted, and lose the prize. In vain did his auditor disclaim, much more distinctly than he had hitherto done, all intention of seeking the lady's hand. His Lordship either refused to listen to him,

or, in a bantering strain, affected to disbelieve his protestations. "See how attentive I have been to your interests," he exclaimed, taking a paper from his pocket—"I have procured a *carte blanche* from your commanding officer, allowing you to come to London every day, so that you will be enabled to prosecute your addresses to a quick and successful issue."

"I feel infinitely obliged, but I can assure your Lordship ——."

"Lose no time, lose no time," interposed the Peer—"it is the only way in which your fortune can be made. It is my wish that this matter should be quickly accomplished. Upon this, indeed, my favour entirely depends, and recollect, Captain Colyton, that the King's favour depends upon mine."—After this speech, which was uttered in a whisper, he thrust the paper into Walter's hand, and declaring that he had not a moment to lose, hurried off, and disappeared in the crowd.

CHAPTER VI.

Sure she has a garrison of devils in her tongue, she uttereth such balls of wild fire. She has so nettled the King that all the doctors in the country will scarce cure him.

PHILASTER.

SEEING nothing more of Seagrave, Walter withdrew from the Court, not a little gratified by his colloquy with the monarch, but equally embarrassed by the few parting words he had exchanged with Lord Sunderland, which had produced a sharp mental contest between pride and prudence. The implied menace of the minister's speech, now that he had time to reflect upon it, fired him with indignation, making him regret that he had not in the first instance

been more resolute and explicit, so as to have saved himself from a dictatorial demeanour and language, which he could hardly help considering an insult. His Lordship had acquired no right to prescribe his course of action, even in the most insignificant particular, still less in such an all-important step as the choice of a wife ; it was due to Mrs. Audley, as well as to himself and the Peer, that his intentions should be placed beyond all possibility of doubt ; and since the latter refused to listen to his oral disclamations, he resolved to write him a letter, declaring, that as he had no present views of marriage, he should decline the honour of repeating his visit to Mrs. Audley, and therefore returned the leave of absence from camp that had been procured for him. Why the noble Secretary should so wilfully and pertinaciously misapprehend him, he could not surmise ; but whatever were his motives for such inexplicable conduct, it was high time to leave him no excuse for continuing it.

Thus far the arguments of pride were unan-

swerable ; but, on the other hand, prudence whispered that he ought not to run the risk of offending so powerful a person by any rash or inconsiderate measure. At present Fortune smiled benignantly upon him, and every thing seemed auspicious for his enrichment and promotion. He was in the high road to favour, and yet he could not help feeling that he might irrecoverably lose his way by a single false step. Sunderland, as Seagrave had repeatedly warned him, was captious, obstinate, and implacable, when thwarted, and his significant declaration that the royal favour depended upon his own, was probably no empty threat. Where would be all his fine prospects, where his chance of being enabled to marry Hetty, should he make Sunderland his enemy, and find the King's ear poisoned against him? Of ever rising under such disadvantages there was not a possibility, and it would be better to quit the army at once than to remain in it under the disheartening circumstances that he had anticipated. These were weighty considerations ; either way the

dilemma seemed embarrassing, until an expedient occurred, which, as it offered a sort of compromise between his conflicting feelings, he determined to adopt. Instead of writing to his Lordship, whose testy and punctilious humour might take offence at such a measure, he would call in the course of the present evening upon Mrs. Audley, and seize an opportunity of mentioning to her that his affections were engaged, when her feminine delicacy would lead her to abandon all thought of continuing their acquaintance, she would naturally apprise Sunderland that she wished not to see any more of his friend; and thus the frustration of his Lordship's scheme would emanate from the lady, not from Walter, and no umbrage could be taken by either party.

Just as he had arranged this notable plan, he discovered, upon looking around him, that he had unconsciously wandered within sight of the Countess of Dorchester's mansion in St. James's Square, and not knowing when he might again be in London, especially if he should return

his leave of absence, he determined to embrace the present moment for paying her a visit. That there might not lurk in his bosom some secret wish to exhibit his regimentals, or to relate the distinguished reception with which the King had honoured him, we will not absolutely affirm ; but if such were the fact, it must be recollected that he was young and new to the world, and that a spice of vanity might perhaps insinuate itself even into the head of a greybeard, if he had been thus unexpectedly flattered with the notice of royalty.

“ *Ben venuto, Capitano mio !*” cried the Countess gaily, as he entered the apartment—
“ Morlay, *Carissima mia, eccolo !* did I not tell you, that when decked in his dragoon uniform, he would be a prettier fellow than Churchill, or Dick Fanshawe, or Frank Gwyn ? Captain Colyton, you will excuse my noticing you till I have reviewed your regimentals, which are indeed the most valuable part of many of our officers. Exceedingly handsome, upon my word—not you, but the sword knot ;—very

well conducted, I protest!—not you again, but this embroidered seam down the back—graceful, is it not, Morlay? meaning the feathered cap, not its wearer.”

“Being in London,” said Walter bowing and smiling—“I thought I might venture.”

“Stop, stop!” interposed the Countess, continuing to walk round him with looks and attitudes of a burlesque admiration—“I cannot attend to you till I have done with your uniform;—the jacket might be a *leetle* tighter in the waist; one button of the chest should be opened to discover the laced edge of a cambric handkerchief; this fringe tassel should hang half an inch lower, *et voilà un homme fait à peindre*, as the old Duchess of Portsmouth says. Don’t be offended with me, Captain Colyton; the worth of the cinnamon tree, you know, is in its bark, and if we judge of a nut by its shell, and a melon by its coat, why should we not estimate an officer in the same way? Most people do so in point of fact, though few, like me, have the honesty to confess it.”

“ Ay, you are too honest by half for such a hollow-hearted, hypocritical age as this,” cried the sycophantic Mrs. Morlay—“ It is one of your greatest faults, and only serves to make you enemies.”

“ And yet you yourself claim merit, *mia cara*, for speaking your mind openly and freely.”

“ Yes, to you, because I am truly your friend, and know moreover that you have the good sense to bear it ; but there are few indeed with whom I would venture to use a similar freedom.”

“ Ah ! this independence is the charm of friendship, and therefore, *mia cara*, I scruple not to tell you, with my usual frankness, that you look ill to-day, your eyes are heavy, I kept you up too late last night reading to me the new Romance, and as I see you want to enjoy a siesta in your own apartment, I will indulge you in half an hour’s respite from my nonsense.”

“ Well, your Ladyship *does* talk nonsense sometimes, as I often tell you with my usual

bluntness, and yet, may I die if I had not rather listen to it than to the sense of other people ! However, for the present I will deny myself the pleasure of hearing it, for I really stand in need of a little repose." And so saying, the complaisant toad-eater, who perfectly understood the hint that had been given to her, curtsied to Walter and withdrew.

" *Eh, via la scioccheria !* a truce to nonsense !" cried the Countess as the door was shut—" Captain Colyton, you will hardly know me, for I am going to talk sensibly, and upon matters of moment, in which I am sorry to say that you yourself are deeply—*Corpo di Bacco !* what a sweet lace this is to your wristband ! and you have one of the new gorgets, I see,— what a love it is ! they are much prettier than the old. Oh ! I forgot—I was going to be serious and sapient, that is to say, to play the fool in the opposite direction to that which Brutus took. Well then, let me torture my features into a grave expression and begin. But first, tell me how it is possible you should have flown

to me so soon after my dispatching a billet doux to you at Hounslow? Did you speed hither upon the winged Pegasus, or on the magical horse of Prince Schaibar?"

"I had not the honour of receiving any letter. I came to town for the purpose of being presented to his Majesty, and a more flattering reception——"

"Bah! *cela va sans dire*. I saw it in your elated looks the moment you entered, and I can fancy all the rest. Let us talk of something more german to the matter, for our time is short. Listen! hem!—when in your last visit you called Captain Seagrave your friend, and stated how closely he had attached himself to you, I felt assured that he was hatching some iniquitous scheme, of which you were probably intended to be the victim, and I determined to ferret it out. You are not aware, perhaps, that the Court and all its purlieus constitute at this critical juncture, a hateful arena of contending plots, counterplots, and universal espionage. Repugnant as it is to my nature, I am obliged

in self-defence to use the same unworthy weapons that are employed against me. I detest Lord Sunderland, and I care not who knows it, not solely because he procured me to be forbidden the Court, and ejected from my apartments in Whitehall, but because I believe him to be a corrupt villain, who abuses the King's confidence, though his Majesty will not be so persuaded. I have spies in his house, ay and in others too that he wots not of, and thus is it that I am enabled to ask you what sentiment you hold of Mrs. Audley, and how you liked your entertainment in Ormonde Street?"

"Amazement! are you aware of my visit in that quarter. I have been silent upon the subject; Seagrave must have divulged it."

"Tush! I have better and more trustworthy information than *he* could furnish. Listen, and you shall learn in a few words the characters of the conspirators, who have leagued together to force you, at the point of the sword, into a marriage from which you would derive little comfort and less honour. Sun-

derland I will not attempt to portray; he is too subtle, too machiavelian, too plausible a devil to allow his portrait to be taken, although it may be seen in his actions. Mrs. Audley, having been seduced by him, became his mistress; he is tired of her, and has for some time been seeking to entrap a respectable husband for her, in order that she may be made an honest woman, as the phrase flies. Imagine not that he was moved to this by any feeling of compassion or remorse. Not he! he was impelled by fear, for he is a craven at heart,—by fear of her brothers, two low, fierce, desperate swash-bucklers, subalterns in the service of the States, who have long vowed vengeance against him for the wrongs done to their sister. These furious fellows have just arrived in England, and they are the imagined bravoës, who mistaking you for the noble—psha! for the rascally seducer of their sister, assaulted you so hotly, and had so nearly dispatched you, in the fields beyond Ormonde Street. And now what think you of Sunderland?"

“ The villain ! the crafty, cowardly, insolent, treacherous villain ! ” exclaimed Walter, reddening with rage, and instinctively grasping the pommel of his sword, “ this explains his consternation when I told him the particulars of the attack, and mentioned the name of one of my assailants ; and this also affords a clue to the silence that I was so strictly enjoined to keep, and the blind haste with which he ever urged me to hurry on my marriage. He shall answer for it—he shall answer for it ; were he ten times what he is, he shall do me justice with his sword, or I will brand him as a dastard and a knave, yea, even in the King’s council-chamber. And Seagrave, too ; who and what is he that he has dared to lend himself to this foul conspiracy ? ”

“ A spy and bully of Sunderland’s, retained in the latter capacity, principally that he might defend his master against these roystering brothers, whose threats have kept his Lordship in perpetual dread.”

“ I see it all—I see it all, and the low ruffian

shall render me a strict account the moment I have settled with his master. 'They would have found, indeed, that I was neither to be galled nor intimidated into the marriage they projected for me, but the insult is not the less audacious and unpardonable. Why was I pitched upon, I would fain know, for the double honour of espousing the lady, and screening her seducer from assassination ?'

"Seagrave was doubtless to be handsomely rewarded for accomplishing a negotiation that was rendered doubly difficult because the lady insisted upon having a gentleman for her husband, and no one could be so expressly adapted for his purpose as yourself. Your total unacquaintance with the characters and scandal of the metropolis, and the silence they had enjoined you, secured them pretty well against any discovery of their plot, or of Mrs. Audley's real history ; while your fine figure—(*mi perdonate questo complimento,*) and the respectability of your family, were equally sure to please the lady, and to satisfy her brothers."

“As you seem to possess some magical power of penetrating all the plots of London, and developing every thing that is obscure, perhaps your ladyship can also inform me who were the strange gentlemen in the lone house, to one of whom I stand indebted for the preservation of my life.”

“The spies and scouts from whom I gleaned my other intelligence could tell me nothing upon this subject. While those parties remained in the house, their proceedings were involved in deep mystery; they decamped before daylight on the morning subsequent to your attack, nor have they been heard of since.”

“It was my intention to have visited Mrs. Audley this night for the purpose of——”

“I suspected that you might be contemplating a return to Ormonde Street, and therefore was it that I dispatched a messenger in such haste to your quarters to desire an immediate interview with you. As you value your life, dream not of again calling upon that woman. Through one of her servants who is in my pay, I learn that the conspirators have hatched a new

plot for inveigling you. The lady—poor thing! that is natural enough, is most anxious to secure you for her husband; when next you call, the brothers are to surprise you in her company; a priest is to be in readiness; and you are to be offered the pleasant alternative of either marrying her, or having your throat cut. Whether Sunderland and Seagrave be parties or not to this nefarious scheme, I cannot exactly determine; but certain it is that the latter has contrived to pacify the brothers, either by large bribes, or by pledging himself to assist in securing you as a husband for the sister, for which service the worthy Captain has been rewarded by his noble patron with a Major's Commission, though I cannot learn in what regiment."

"To what a precious gang was I about to commit myself, and what an atrocious plot have you unravelled! Oh Madam! how shall I ever express,—I know not what acknowledgments—my heart is full of gratitude, although my lips may refuse to give it utterance."

"So much the better; I told you once before

that I hated all effusions of the sort, though I will put your sincerity to the practical test. Promise me that, for the present, you will abandon all thoughts of revenge. Against visiting Mrs. Audley I exact no pledge, for you will not of course rush upon destruction ; but promise me that you will seek no quarrel, either with Sunderland or Seagrave, one of whom is as much above your reach as the other is beneath your notice. Eventually you shall do yourself justice, both as a gentleman and a soldier — I only ask a delay of a few days, — of a fortnight, — will you comply with my request ?”

“ After reserving to myself the right of eventually vindicating my own honour, I can refuse you nothing, and I promise therefore to conform to your wishes.”

“ *Basta ! vanne via !* enough ! begone — I told you my time was short. Remember that you are upon honour, and that your hands are tied up for a fortnight. You, I see, may be saved from running your head against a wall, but there is one coming who will build up a

wall against which to run his head." She waved her hand impatiently, as if to silence Walter as he was about to speak, and he accordingly made his bow and withdrew, thrilling with varied emotions as he thought of the snare that had been laid for him, and of the fatal catastrophe to which it might possibly have led; penetrated with gratitude towards his fair and fascinating preserver, and inflamed with rage as he reverted to the treacherous machinations of Sunderland and Seagrave. Hastening to a chocolate house, he wrote a few lines to the former, enclosing the leave of absence which had been forced upon his acceptance, and simply stating that at the end of a fortnight he should call upon his Lordship for certain explanations in which his honour was deeply implicated. He then set off for Hounslow, too much exasperated to reflect how completely his fair prospects were blighted by this most unexpected *denouement*, devising various plans for punishing the Peer and his satellite, and feeding his wrath by muttered exclamations of "Yes, for fourteen days

—for one whole fortnight — I am almost sorry that I gave the pledge—for fourteen long days and nights I must curb my passion, and refrain from following the impulse of my wishes; but at the end of that time Sunderland, great as he is, shall be called to a strict account. I know it is a perilous attempt—I know it may involve me in ruin, but I will find him out,—I will take no denial,—he shall give me satisfaction, or I will publicly expose and insult him, to whatever sanctuary he may fly.”

While Walter was thus fuming and fretting as he returned to Hounslow, the Countess of Dorchester was preparing for the reception of a more illustrious visitant, though one who was far from being so amenable to her good advice. This was no other than the King, who without any retinue, and in the dusk of the evening, for he had the decency not to obtrude his visits of this nature upon the public eye, presented himself in St. James’s Square.

“I am happy to see your Majesty wearing such cheerful looks, and apparently in such good spirits,” said the Countess.

“ Why yes, Catherine, I have reason, I have reason, the Saints be praised ! My Court was better attended than it has ever been before ; I have received the most gratifying assurances of attachment from all parties ; the addresses presented to me have been numerous, loyal, and obedient beyond all precedent ; the great work of conversion prospers well ; the Propagandists are active and successful ; and the Holy Father has been kind enough to send me from Rome some consecrated napkins for the use of the Prince of Wales, who I have no doubt will now soon recover from his sickness ; all which occurrences are of pleasant and cheering import, so far as the public prospects are concerned. And as for my personal recreations, Sir Eliab Harvey, who has imported some wild boars from Germany, has invited me to hunt one of them tomorrow in Waltham Forest, and to dine with him afterwards.”

“ The last is at least a harmless recreation, and I would much rather see your Majesty pursuing the wild boar than hunting your subjects into the pale of Rome, a perilous sport, which

may have much such a termination as that of Actæon. I can discover little cause of gratulation in the other points that seem to have awakened such complacent feelings. Upon the subject of the Holy Father and the clouts I will not obtrude my opinion, since I fear it might be an unwelcome one ! but as you have given my tongue a *carte blanche*, and even invited me to a perfect freedom of speech, I must remind your Majesty that few courtiers, not even Catholic ones, pour any confession of disloyalty into their prince's ear ; and as for these numerous addresses, suspicious from their very fulsomeness and intemperate professions of homage—may I venture to state what they are like ?”

“ Whether I grant or withhold my permission, you will venture any thing in these loquacious moods.”

“ Well then, did your Majesty, after landing from Helvoetsluys, ever stand upon the shore at Harwich during an ebb tide ? If you did, you may have remarked that while the waves seemed to be hurrying towards you, and fawning

around you, and laying themselves at your feet, they were covertly stealing farther and farther from you at every moment, and betaking themselves towards the coast of Holland, to offer the same homage in an opposite direction."

"Madam, you abuse the licence I have given you," said the King, offended at this evident allusion to the growing popularity of the Prince of Orange. "I cannot distrust the sincerity of these addresses. There is one from the Presbytery of Scotland, in which they loyally pray that Providence may give me the the heads of mine enemies, and the hearts of my subjects."

"This is not the slavish fealty it purports to be, but an audacious satire, since, as your Majesty is at peace with all the world, you should be presumed to have no enemies; while to pray that you *may* possess the hearts of your subjects is to imply that at present you have them not."

"You pervert the meaning of these pious and submissive men. Even Father Petre, though not well affected towards that church, approves of the address."

“Then all your Majesty’s real friends should condemn it.”

“I will hear no insinuations against Father Petre, that truly devout man, whose very countenance is an assurance of his sanctity.”

“So much the worse ; when religion takes up its habitation in a man’s face, it is generally a tenant for life, and seldom travels low enough to reach his heart.”

“You hate the good Father because he procured your removal from Court.”

“I do, and I hate him worse because I think he will end by conferring the same favour upon your Majesty. Oh ! let him not, I beseech you, cancel the Restoration ; let him not undo the Duke of Albemarle’s work ; let it not be said hereafter that one Monk crowned Charles the Second, and another uncrowned James the Second. Nay, I *will* declare my mind in spite of that frown and of your Majesty’s threatened anger, because I speak as your friend, as one whose interests are identified with your own, and who has therefore a warrant for her since-

city. Remember, I beseech you, the witty saying of Ronquillo the Spanish ambassador—remember the late King's prediction, that when you came to the throne you would soon be obliged to resume your travels."

"Madam, the unwarrantable latitudes you allow yourself compel me to recollect another of his sayings, that my priests allowed me to retain my mistresses as a penance."

"They gave you not *me*,—I should despise myself if they had ; on the contrary, they exiled me to Ireland, they expelled me from the court, which is at least consistent, for it has ever been the effect of their measures to drive away your friends and surround you with enemies and traitors. But they have not silenced my tongue, and I will employ it to rouse your Majesty, ere it be yet too late, from your fatal dream of security. Lord Sunderland and Father Petre are ruining you while you are asleep. Awake ! arise ! or be for ever fallen ! The three crowns of England, Ireland, and Scotland are at stake, they totter on your head, they depend on the

hazard of a die, and you suffer this desperate game to be played out by a designing knave and a hot-headed zealot."

"This audacity is intolerable! I will hear no more: do you know whom you are addressing? You forget yourself, Madam, and grow rude."

"Be Kent unmannerly when Lear is mad!" exclaimed the Countess, who was of a petulant and daring temper, that would not brook control of any sort. "Can I contemplate the project you are labouring to achieve, and the means by which you hope to accomplish it, and not pronounce it an insane one? The Church of England has been alienated from you by the imprisonment and trial of the Bishops: when Admiral Strickland ordered mass to be said on board the fleet, the sailors rose in mutiny, and threatened to throw his priests overboard: when it was attempted to introduce Catholic officers into Colonel Beaumont's regiment, the soldiers followed the example of the sailors; and it is upon this Protestant navy, and this Protestant

army, that your Majesty relies for the forced conversion of a Protestant nation, which has been born and bred in a profound detestation and perfect horror of Popery. O sapient project ! O hopeful crusade ! O prudent and sagacious counsellors ! who seek to smother a fire with gunpowder, and to make a whole brave people commit moral suicide !”

“ I am lowering myself in replying to this disrespectful and unseasonable philippic,” said the King, not unwilling, nevertheless, to embark in a religious discussion. “ It is sufficient to state that God has given me power over this nation, and if I exercise it in endeavouring to convert them to a better faith, I am but acting conscientiously and according to the dictates of duty.”

“ Judge of others by yourself—give the nation credit for opposing you from the same motives and feelings, and it will then become a question whose system of theology ought to predominate—that of a great and mighty people, or that of a King, and a paltry handful of his

courtiers, some of whom, it may be suspected, are interested apostates, not convinced proselytes."

"Mine is a deep and solemn conviction, whereas nine-tenths of the people, opposing me only from contumacy and disaffection, have no religion whatever."

"Perhaps not, but they have a hatred of Popery, a love of liberty, a pride of opinion, which will not allow them to submit to dictation. Men may offer themselves up to martyrdom without either religious belief or practice."

"I am no persecutor, I desire nothing but universal liberty of conscience, as my declaration of indulgence incontestably proves. I do not even exercise the power that has been enforced successfully by other monarchs. Constantine, Clovis, and Gustavus Vasa converted their subjects; and even among my own royal predecessors, did not Henry the Eighth compel the people to conform to all the changes of his own vacillating faith, and Mary condemn her heretical subjects to the flames?"

“ The great rebellion was the ultimate consequence, and your father the victim, of that tyranny.”

“ Am I not the Lord’s anointed? do I not govern by divine right, and is not passive obedience enjoined to subjects by the Scriptures?”

“ Beware how you wield that two-edged sword, for the same Scriptures afford the people a precedent ‘ To bind their Kings in chains, and their nobles with links of iron.’ Rehoboam, the lawful King of Israel, was rejected by ten of the twelve tribes, and Gideon’s legitimate sons were put aside in favour of Abimelech. When Asa the King was slain by Zimri, the children of Israel elected Omri for their governor ; the people of Edom would have no Kings to reign over them, but only a deputy ; and the Maccabees—”

“ This is wresting Scripture to the purposes of treason and rebellion,” interposed James, who, although always ready to start a theological controversy, was no less eager to abandon it when he found himself getting the worst of the

argument ;—" you know not of what you talk ; these are not matters for a woman's handling, least of all for one who is still among the unregenerate ; nor did I come here to moot points of divinity. It has been my pleasure heretofore to find in Catherine, Countess of Dorchester, a witty and vivacious friend, whose cheerful converse might gladden me when I sought relaxation from the heavy cares of royalty ; but if she is to be occasionally metamorphosed into a bold and irreverent monitress, a disaffected politician, and a contentious polemic, it were better I should withdraw from her company, and not return to her till she is restored to herself."

" I am myself now, Sire ; now when I throw off my folly and my levity, and have the courage to give you this solemn and unceremonious warning. Nero might play the fiddle when Rome was burning, but Catherine Sedley cannot and will not play the fool when King James is about to throw his country into convulsion, and to peril his own crown. God knows that I have paid dearly for the honour of being your

mistress; I have found poor solace in the title with which you graced me, and which only alienated me from my father, while it could not hush the whispers of my conscience; but oh! if your Majesty would indeed allow me to become your friend, if I might persuade you to listen to the wishes of the nation, to discard your evil counsellors, to pause in your perilous ——”

“ Silence, Madam! What! am I to be schooled and catechised by a woman? You have forgotten both yourself and me, and I should commit the same error were I to listen any more to this audacious railing. Good night to you, Madam.”

Exasperated as he was, the King did not omit his habitual courtesy, making a low bow as he quitted the apartment; while the Countess ejaculated, with a concluding touch of satire—“ There is no help for him, there is no hope for him, unless we confide in the 116th Psalm, which tells us that—‘ The Lord preserveth the simple.’ ”

CHAPTER VII.

O Heavens !

Why does my blood thus muster to my heart,
Making both it unable for itself,
And dispossest all my other parts
Of necessary fitness ?

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE these events were occurring in London, the inmates of Hales Court were unremitting in their attentions to the stranger, who, in consequence of his accident in Goathurst-wood, had been so unexpectedly thrown upon their hospitality and protection. The result of Mr. Shelton's consultation with Father Bartholomew was a determination not to call in another professional man to supply the place of the surgeon whose fears had made him decline a continuance

of his visits. If there were ground for these misgivings, and every fresh observation seemed to confirm their justice, it would be perilous for all parties to extend the circle of their confidants; it might endanger the liberty, perhaps the life of the patient, without adequately advantaging his health; for the priest, with the instructions he had received, flattered himself that he was competent to effect his cure, notwithstanding the surgeon's sinister prediction, that the fever which had manifested itself was likely to fall upon the brain. Appearances at first did not seem to warrant this apprehension, all immediate danger having been obviated by the excessive bleeding to which the invalid had been subjected, but which, while it had probably been the means of preserving his mental faculties, had so completely exhausted and enervated his body, that some time threatened to elapse before he would be in a condition to leave the house. Although he could not deny his debility, and his utter inaptitude for travelling, he testified the utmost impatience to be

gone, endeavouring to conceal the prostration of his strength, and earnestly imploring that he might be sent away in any easy vehicle that could be procured, or even in a litter, if he were deemed unable to support the motion of a carriage. He intimated that money was no object to him whatever; that he should wish to be moved at night to avoid observation, and conveyed towards the coast, requesting at the same time that the domestics of Hales Court, and the peasants who were instrumental in bringing him thither, a service for which they should be well rewarded, might be enjoined to observe a strict secrecy upon the subject.

“Whatever may be your motives for this concealment,” said Mr. Shelton, “I believe them to be honourable ones; I shall exact no confidence that you may not feel spontaneously disposed to offer, and which indeed it may be better for all parties that you should withhold; but in common humanity I cannot suffer you to depart while you are thus deplorably helpless, and afflicted moreover with a fever which

may require the most delicate treatment to prevent its taking a dangerous turn. In this respect, and in this only, I must put a restraint upon your wishes, and make you my prisoner until you can be removed with safety. Were you to venture forth in your present precarious plight, your life would in all probability pay the forfeit of your rashness."

"My life!" exclaimed the stranger, speaking with an energy and enthusiasm that gave no intimation of his reduced state,—"*If that* only were at stake, I should feel none of this anxiety and fiery impatience. *My* life! I have perilled it a thousand times over; it is in imminent jeopardy at this very moment; for months past I have never laid down my head at night without an expectation that ere the morrow dawned I might be a prisoner or a corpse, and yet I would run this frightful gauntlet for years to come, ay, had I ten thousand lives I would surrender them all, if thus I could assure the triumph of the glorious cause in which I am embarked. Oh, what am I? Oh, what would it import that

the pulsation of this individual heart should be stopped before its time, if so the hearts of millions might throb in the joy of recovered civil and religious freedom? Away with sickness! this is no moment to be ill. ‘Throw physic to the dogs, I’ll none on’t!’ Hark! it is the voice of England calling upon me to be her champion in the coming struggle. I am well. I am recovered at the sound, I am as strong as ever. Be pleased to lend me your hand, Sir, that I may rise from the couch—I must quit your house instantly.”

“My good friend, I entreat you to be composed; this excited state of feeling will have a most injurious effect upon your health; and how can you suppose I would suffer you to quit my house when you are unable to rise from your couch?”

“It is for your sake, more than for my own, that I am thus anxious to be gone; I have spoken openly, unguardedly, on purpose that you might feel alarm and eject me, and yet you will not take the hint; yet you suffer your

benevolence to prevail over prudence, I might almost say, over self-preservation. So much courage, so much generosity, so much humanity towards a stranger, I did not expect to encounter from any, least of all from one of your persuasion; and in proportion as your noble nature prompts you to incur all risks in protecting me, do I feel impelled to withdraw, in order that I may not implicate you and your family. I have so long confronted danger, that I have learned to spurn, to laugh at it; but, gracious Heavens! if you or yours—if the preservers of my life were to become compromised—Mr. Shelton, I solemnly warn you, that you are incurring an awful responsibility by harbouring me, and I conjure you, by all that you love and hold dear, to suffer me to depart—to send me away instantly.”

“ I hold nothing so dear, nothing so sacred as the duties of humanity, and these will not allow me to comply with your request. It were little less than murder to turn you out, nor do I see what law, human or divine, I can

violate by succouring a helpless stranger. If to do this be an offence, it is at least an involuntary one ; to thrust you forth, at the risk of your life, would in my eyes be a conscious crime. I prefer the former course, and upon me and mine be the peril of its adoption."

"Generous, noble-hearted man ! these, too, were the exalted sentiments of your reverend kinsman. How have I been mistaken ! how have I been blinded by my prejudices ! I am overcome by your magnanimity, yet it is my helplessness rather than my will that makes me consent to remain for a few days longer beneath your hospitable roof. O that the hour were come when I could release you from the fearful hazards of my presence !"

"Be nameless, and we are innocent ; be composed, and you will soon recover ; your stay cannot be long, and we will do our best to beguile the time. Shall I show you our latest news-letter from London ?"

"My mind is upon tenter-hooks till I can see one ! Why, why am I crippled by this

accursed accident, at a moment when the fate of a whole nation — where is my pocket-book ? these letters, these all-important letters ! O that I had but delivered them before this cruel mischance ! Let me see the news, I beseech you : you know not what I have at heart, nor what mighty interests are committed to my charge.”

When the paper was brought to him, he ran over it eagerly, returning it, after perusal, with the observation, that it did not contain much intelligence of moment, nor any thing of a very pleasant nature.

“ We will endeavour to beguile your hours of confinement with something more agreeable,” said Mr. Shelton — “ you seem well enough this morning to be amused with conversation, and if you will promise me not to talk too much, and to check as far as possible your impetuous feelings, you shall receive a visit from my daughter and her friend, Edith Colyton, your fair preservers, as you call them.”

The stranger willingly gave the pledge re-

quired, expressing the delight he should feel in becoming acquainted with the parties who had so essentially served him. "Agatha! Edith!" said Mr. Shelton smiling, as he ushered them into the apartment, "it is you who should introduce this gentleman to me, for your acquaintance with him preceded mine, and I can only announce him to you as the stranger whom you encountered under such distressing circumstances in Goathurst-wood. Stranger! this is my daughter, and this her friend, Miss Colyton, who are alike anxious to complete the happy work of your recovery, and to assist Father Bartholomew, by acting as your nurses. At present, however, they come not in this capacity, but as visitors, to congratulate you on your amended looks, and I will take care that they do not talk you out of patience, by returning, as soon as I have written some letters, to relieve you from their tongues. For yourself, I recommend you to be as much as possible a listener, since your exhausted plight will not warrant a too free use of speech."

So saying, he withdrew, when, notwithstanding his parting injunction, the patient instantly poured forth his gratitude in that strain of spontaneous and impassioned eloquence, which is ever dictated by deep feeling, and which, indeed, from the fervour and enthusiasm of his temperament, formed the character of his habitual discourse. In the present instance, his feelings were exalted by surprise and admiration; for, as he contemplated the females to whom his effusion was addressed, he was scarcely less struck by the majestic figure, noble air, and placid but surpassing beauty of Agatha, than by the delicate and timid loveliness of the fair, fragile, sylph-like Edith. As the former bent upon him her calm, hazel orbs, and the latter threw a furtive glance in the same direction, both were filled with wonderment at the alteration in his appearance since the moment in which they had beheld him lying, apparently lifeless, beneath the tree. The wound in his forehead was no longer perceptible, the black bandage that covered it being concealed by

large locks of the same hue ; the ghastly paleness that had invested his features was succeeded by a slight flush, not the less becoming because it sprang from fever ; the eyes which had been shut, imparting such a death-like character to his face, were now open, and oh ! what radiance, what beaming intelligence did their sunshine diffuse around him ! How sweet, too, how silvery, and yet how animated were the tones of his voice ! how interesting, how touching were the suffering and languor which, as he strove to conceal them, only awakened their sympathies the more deeply !

Such were the first feelings impressed even upon the calm Agatha, and with much more vividness upon her acutely sensitive friend. Nothing, perhaps, appeals so powerfully to the tenderness of the female bosom, as the sight of youth and manly beauty thus bowed down to sudden helplessness, and thrown upon the protection of the weaker sex. Every thing in the case before them conspired to heighten this feeling ; the manner of their first finding the

stranger was romantic and extraordinary—there was a secret and a mystery about him which stimulated the imagination; while his personal appearance, his eloquence, his generous enthusiasm, and the alarming nature of his accident, softened the heart; and above all, they already began to feel for him that attachment which we almost invariably entertain for those on whom we have conferred a signal service. Such being the respective impressions of the colloquists, it may be imagined with how deep and thrilling an interest they commenced one of those conversations which developing, concentrating, and realizing all the fond but vague conceptions of the youthful heart, form an epoch in the life of the parties, and are cherished by memory throughout the remainder of existence. As the acorn that is to become a mighty oak may be planted in a minute, so may the first seeds of a great and ineradicable passion be sown in the human bosom in the briefest space of time, although in both cases duration, circumstance, and congeniality may be required,

to foster the germs into maturity. A single half hour of such a conversation as we have described was quite sufficient to implant the incipient sentiment which time and opportunity seldom fail to ripen into love. Each seemed to have found in the other all that could delight and satisfy the secret reveries and aspirations of the heart; but, although the result was identical, the mode of its production, and the way in which it was exhibited, were modified by the characters of the parties. Ardent, sanguine, and naturally eloquent, the stranger took the lead in the discourse, not so much, however, to display himself, as to draw out the opinions of Agatha; the grandeur and liberality of whose sentiments, delivered as they were with the fearless frankness of a calm self-possession, seemed at once to delight and to astonish him. From her religion he had expected to find her a slavish, narrow-minded bigot; he discovered that she could adhere to the Catholic faith, and yet cherish notions as generous and enlightened as his own; while she was so temperate towards all who differed

from her, that he appeared even to himself, especially when he recollected his indiscriminate prejudices against *all* of her persuasion, to be the most intolerant of the two. Such, however, was his natural candour, that he confessed the pleasure he found in being disabused of his erroneous impressions, so far as the Shelton family were concerned, admitting that his unfavourable conclusions had been instilled into him, rather than derived from actual observation, and yet seeming to think that the inmates of Hales Court formed a marvellous exception to the rest of their Catholic brethren.

“ We admit and deplore the fanaticism of some of our brethren,” said Agatha ; “ but as you acknowledge yourself to have been widely mistaken in one instance, is it not possible that you may be equally wrong in one hundred or one thousand, especially as you have trusted to hearsay evidence, instead of employing your own senses ? Alas ! this is the way that mutual errors and hatreds are perpetuated. Worshiping one common Deity, and professing together the

same religion, the very spirit of which is peace and love, why should we persecute and abhor one another because we may disagree in some unimportant construction of the letter? If it would be deemed absurd to hate all those who differ from us in outward lineaments, it must surely be equally preposterous to detest others for not agreeing with us in inward sentiments. Since there cannot be any creed so orthodox as a Christian *life*, why should we estimate men by their professions of faith instead of their actions? Why, indeed, should we attach so much importance to belief of any sort, which by its very nature is an involuntary operation of the mind, as totally independent of the will as our stature and our complexion? In the prayer that our Lord himself has composed for our express use, there is no mention of any particular belief, nor has he elsewhere insisted upon it; for when the Lawyer tempting him, inquired what he should do to inherit eternal life, our Saviour did not stipulate for conformity to any established creed, but directed him to love God with all his heart,

and his neighbour as himself. James, too, when he is giving a definition of pure religion and undefiled, does not make it consist in articles of faith, but in works of charity, and in purity of living. After such holy authorities, it may appear irreverent to allude to one of the late addresses presented to our monarch, and yet there was truth and reason in the remark, that the Declaration of Indulgence for all sects resembled Manna, which suited every man's palate; and that men's different apprehensions about religion could no more be forced into conformity than their different *gustos*."

"My own sentiments, my own sentiments exactly!" cried the stranger, with evident delight: "but never, never did I expect to hear them proclaimed at Hales Court, all the inmates of which seem to be equally generous and enlightened, and yet they all profess—pardon me, pardon me, thou incomparable woman! I was about to recur to that sweeping intolerance which henceforward I disclaim for ever."

"If there be any merit in my opinions," said

Agatha, “not to myself, but to my dear father be the praise ascribed, for he it is who has instilled them into me, even from my tenderest age.”

“And with such liberal views, surely, surely he cannot be favourable to the arbitrary, illegal, outrageous measures of the present government.”

“He is an Englishman, Sir, like yourself; as such, he considers liberty to be his birthright; as a free-born Briton, he has personally and solemnly warned the King against persistance in his mad career; and he only retired from London because he could not prevent the crisis and convulsion which he has long anticipated.”

“O England, my country, my dear, dear country!” exclaimed the stranger, starting up from his recumbent posture, and passionately clasping his hands—“who shall despair of thy fortunes, when even among those who have been falsely deemed the most recreant of thy sons are to be found the noblest champions of thy liberty? Never, never!—thousands have already deeply sworn it, and millions shall parti-

cipate the holy oath—*never* shalt thou become a land of slaves ! May thy children perish utterly and for ever ere they suffer the accursed chains of religious or civil despotism to fetter their souls, and manacle their brave hands. Thou wert meant to be the queen and the example of the nations, and thou shalt not bow down thy beautiful and majestic head to be trampled into the dust, either by the heels of kings or priests. My heart is bursting at the audacious thought ; ay, and the last drop of its blood shall be spilt ere such an impious degradation be consummated. Hear me, O Heaven ! I swear it ! I swear it ! I swear it !”

No Pythoness, in the moment of her divine afflatus, was ever lighted up by a more passionate fervour than that which possessed the enthusiastic youth as he uttered this adjuration. His eyes sparkled ; every feature spoke ; a halo seemed to play about his countenance, and all his energies had been concentrated as he ejaculated the final oath, at the conclusion of which he sunk back upon his couch utterly exhausted.

The diffident Edith, seldom prone to speak,

had listened with the deepest interest and delight to the preceding colloquy, not attempting to take any share in it, except when she had timidly ventured to remind the stranger of Mr. Shelton's parting injunction that he should not exert himself too much, an instance of watchful attention which he had acknowledged with a becoming gratitude, though it had failed to moderate his energy. As he fell back upon the couch, she ran up to him, inquiring with looks of the tenderest sympathy whether she could procure him any thing to recruit his strength; a question which was anxiously repeated by Agatha, who had already rung the bell for assistance. In a feeble voice, but with a smiling countenance, the invalid entreated them not to be alarmed, declaring that he had only felt a momentary faintness, which was already passing away. At this juncture Mr. Shelton, accompanied by Father Bartholomew, re-entered the apartment, when they dismissed the young ladies with a gentle admonition for having suffered their patient to over-exert himself, adding, that

by way of punishment for their inattention, they should neither of them see him again until the following morning.

An increase of fever, brought on by the vehemence of the patient's temperament, necessitated a fresh bleeding on the morrow, and the consequent debility, aggravating his impatience and inflaming his ardent feelings, defeated the remedies applied to him, so that he was kept for some time alternating between helpless languor and fits of perilous excitation, thus retarding his recovery and his departure by his over-anxiety to accelerate them. During this period, Agatha and Edith, attending upon him daily as his nurses and companions, ministered to his wants with an affectionate assiduity, and endeavoured to amuse the hours of his confinement by their discourse, by reading to him, or by occasionally diverting him with music. Edith, although her talents would have well qualified her for the task, was restrained by timidity and bashfulness from taking a prominent share in the conversation ; she preferred, indeed, listening

to the discourse of her companions, devouring with a silent delight the stranger's accents, and feeling her whole heart expand and glow with a delicious sympathy as she hearkened to his generous sentiments, or gathered instruction from his account of foreign countries, in which he appeared to have been an extensive traveller. Owing to this diffidence, her character and acquirements did not at first develope themselves to the notice of the invalid, although he could not fail to mark, and to feel with a due gratitude, that she was constantly on the watch to tell him the hour when his febrifuge was to be taken, to guard him against over-exertion in talking, or to minister those trifling services which were flattering in proportion to their unimportance, because they proved that he was never absent from her thoughts. But it was when she read to him that he discovered the keen acuteness and exquisite sensibility of her mind. The remarks she would then timidly offer evinced a penetration that astonished him, while at any tender tale of love or woe, her

voice would falter in spite of the struggle to suppress her feelings, the tears would gush from her eyes, and the blushing, trembling girl, distressed at her own emotion, was often fain to shut the volume, and retire in confusion from the room.

Such intelligence, such tenderness, such vigilant and yet unobtrusive care in her attentions, combined with the delicate loveliness of her appearance, awakened in his bosom a fervent gratitude and a warm regard for Edith, — feelings which might speedily have been kindled into love had he seen her in any other society than that of Agatha. By many, the pensive retiring gentleness and delicate charms of Edith might have been deemed more feminine and fascinating; but the stranger was captivated, enraptured by the collected placidity, the exalted sentiments, and majestic beauty of Agatha. Her noble form seemed to be a temple worthy of the mental divinity enshrined within it, and both appealed to his affections and to his judgment with a power that became at every fresh interview

more and more irresistible. Surprise at the unexpected congeniality of their sentiments upon almost every subject, gratitude for the share she had had in his preservation, as well as for the assiduity with which she ministered towards his recovery, and perhaps an anxiety to repair the injustice of his indiscriminate prejudice against the Catholics, all combined to invest Agatha with a thousand attractions; while the circumstances under which they were daily thrown together for some hours, and the natural ardour of his temperament, favoured and quickened the growth of a passion which seldom requires any great length of time for its developement. It has been said that lovers are never so handsome as when conversing together: the desire to appear amiable in each other's eyes investing their countenances with a moral beauty, super-added to that which nature had previously bestowed. Whether the stranger's enthrallment was accelerated by any additional attractions of this nature, we cannot determine, but certain it is, that yielding to the impulse of his feelings,

and not bestowing a thought upon the perilous predicament in which he was placed, or the impossibility of prosecuting his passion, at least for the present, to any successful issue, he became deeply enamoured of Agatha.

In referring to the tender colloquies in the invalid's apartment, we have used the word lovers in the plural. To which of his fair friends did it apply? Alas, to both! Edith, the soft-hearted, susceptible Edith, won in the first instance by his youth, his beauty, the romantic manner of their encountering, and the mystery that involved him—for he had revealed nothing farther than that he was of good and even distinguished family, although compelled to conceal his name from political considerations,—had been subsequently captivated by the relation of his adventures, the charms of his discourse, and his varied powers of pleasing, until she had gradually surrendered her whole heart, without in the smallest degree suspecting how irrecoverably her affections had become engaged. She found a pleasure in sitting in the room with him,

in reading to him, in stealing timid glances at him when his attention was occupied ; she was sensible of a void in her bosom, and an increased feeling of dejection, when away from him ; but that this new sensation was love, she never once imagined, and therefore sought not to control or check it.

From the calmness and self-possession of Agatha, her attachment had neither been so immediate in its developement, nor so rapid in its growth, and yet day by day it had insensibly received minute accessions, which eventually formed an aggregate of love not inferior to Edith's. Against any surprise of her affections by an unknown and perhaps undeserving adventurer her dignified sense of propriety would have guarded her ; but every thing she saw and heard tended to confirm the stranger's averment, that he was of honourable connections, and not morally culpable, although involved in some deep political responsibility. In his lofty and liberal sentiments, as well as in the singular accordance of their general opinions, notwith-

standing their adherence to different sects in religion, she found at once a pride and a pleasure, while she was more especially struck by the magnanimity that made him so much more solicitous for the safety of the family who had sheltered him, than even for his own preservation. Perhaps she felt flattered in having disabused a generous and distinguished young Protestant of some portion of his prejudice against the Catholic body ; perhaps she was elevated in her own opinion by the evident admiration and homage with which he regarded her ; it is possible that she imagined her impressions to be merely those of gratitude for the warm esteem he testified, or of commiseration for his sufferings and misfortunes ; from whatever sources the passion might have arisen, or however she might have deceived herself as to the fact of its existence, we will not attempt to mislead the reader, but confess at once that Agatha and Edith, unknown to each other, were both equally in love with the stranger.

Few of the party, however, exactly under-

stood the nature of their own feelings until Father Bartholomew, who had been unremitting in his attentions to the patient, expressed his opinion, that although his health was still in a very precarious state, the removal for which he was so anxious might now be effected with comparative safety, and submitted to him a plan for its accomplishment. Paramount considerations for the advancement of the great cause in which he was embarked, as well as a lively regard for the safety of Mr. Shelton and his family, made the stranger hail this announcement with satisfaction, though he became conscious, as he reverted to his incomparable Agatha, that he could not tear himself from Hales Court without a violent wrench to his heart. Edith wept with joy at the thought that the patient over whom she had so tenderly watched was nearly recovered, and about to be withdrawn from the mysterious and unknown dangers that menaced him; while in the next moment a sensation of soft regret thrilled through her bosom, and she wept more vehe-

mently than before, as she reflected that, in all probability, she should never see him again. Agatha's stronger mind enabled her to appreciate with greater calmness the importance to all parties of his removal to a place of safety ; but she now discovered for the first time, that her affections were too deeply engaged to allow her to part from him with indifference ; nay, that the thought of their separation being a final one, filled her with an anguish to which she had hitherto been a stranger, and to which she could no longer hesitate to assign the name of love.

Before the convalescent exposed himself to the fatigues of a journey and voyage, for he had intimated his intention of retiring beyond sea so soon as he should have delivered certain letters wherewith he was charged, Father Bartholomew deemed it prudent that he should habituate himself to the air by making a little excursion in the grounds, taking care however not to exceed his strength. Agatha and Edith offered to accompany him, and they sallied

forth accordingly one sunny evening, the stranger availing himself of the arm that each tendered to his acceptance, but declaring that he felt so much recruited and invigorated by the breezes as not to need support of any sort. At the commencement of their walk but few words were uttered by any of the party, for each was oppressed by the thought that this was in all likelihood the last excursion they should take together, the last interview they should ever enjoy ; and when they found speech, the tender melancholy that all felt imparted a deep and endearing tone to this, their farewell conversation. There was such sweetness, however, even in its sadness, that the stranger, eager to delay as long as possible the moment of return and separation, strolled forward to some distance, in spite of the warnings of the affectionate and watchful Edith, backed by the urgent remonstrances of Agatha. Fatigued and heated by exertions incommensurate with his strength, he at length sat down to rest himself before they returned towards the house. By this time the

sun had set, a cool air had sprung up, he lingered on the bench until a chill sensation struck through him, and he was reminded of his imprudence by a sudden shuddering of his whole frame.

His agitated companions now hurried him home as fast as his increasing debility and indisposition would allow, when Father Bartholomew, shaking his head regretfully at the symptoms, ordered him to bed immediately. In spite of all the remedies applied, a sudden and sharpe relapse ensued, the patient passed a sleepless night, the fever returning with frightful rapidity and increase, directed itself towards the brain, and by the following noon he was in a raging delirium. The most sorrowful and distressing apprehensions now clouded every brow, and saddened every heart at Hales Court, where their unknown inmate had excited the interest, and won the good graces of all. Father Bartholomew, distrusting his competency to grapple with this alarming aggravation of the malady, suggested the propriety of calling in a

regular physician, a proposal which was on the point of being carried into effect, when a discovery was made that for the moment swallowed up every other thought in the paramount object of self-preservation, and filled the whole house with consternation and dismay. In his delirious exclamations, the patient had called upon Sir Miles Forester as his father, desiring most earnestly to see him, and crying out in the next moment, "I am Stanley Forester—I am Stanley Forester!—my friends Sidney and Herbert are safe, they have escaped, I care not for myself—I surrender—I surrender!"

To appreciate the terror and affright excited in the minds of his auditors by these ejaculations, it must be stated that the individual who had thus unconsciously betrayed his name, had been publicly proclaimed a traitor for being concerned in Monmouth's rebellion, as well as for more recent acts of disaffection to King James's government; that a reward had been offered for his apprehension, and that it had been declared high treason to harbour or con-

ceal him, or to refuse giving him up where and whensoever he should be discovered ! The knowledge of the awful responsibility they had incurred would have been sufficiently appalling at any time, but it fell with a more astounding effect upon a family who, having witnessed the terrible and bloody executions of Jeffreys and Kirke only three years before, knew that no mercy was to be expected by those who gave succour or protection to such an inmate as was now lodged within their gates. Nor could they any longer plead ignorance — he had confessed his name — they knew it to be that of a proclaimed traitor, they were bound to give him up, or they became themselves liable to all the frightful penalties of treason !

Of these startling facts, Agatha and Edith, who had been present at the moment of his self-betraying exclamations, were perfectly conscious, and they were therefore parties to the consultation that was now held during an uneasy slumber of the patient, to discuss what course should be adopted in this most perilous

dilemma. A more sad and deeply affected assemblage it would not have been possible to find. The heart-stricken females were too much afflicted by the sickness and peril of the stranger to dream of their own danger ; Mr. Shelton felt for his daughter and her friend more than for himself ; Father Bartholomew thought only how they might best discharge the duties of charity and Christian love, and yet avoid any unnecessary compromise of their common safety. There was a solemn silence of some minutes, during which all eyes were bent upon the venerable priest : Mr. Shelton's and his daughter's, because in every emergency they had been accustomed to look up to him for consolation and advice—Edith's, because his age and experience seemed best to qualify him for a counsellor.

“ I had urged the necessity of calling in farther medical advice,” said the Father, “ willing to dwell first upon the least alarming points, “ but I do not now think that such a measure would be advisable, whether we consider the patient's safety or our own, nor am I without

hopes that the little skill I may possess, aided by my urgent prayers to Heaven, may perfect the recovery of our unfortunate inmate. To this object we must devote all our attentions unaided by others, for henceforth no servant must approach the sick chamber, lest to them also should he divulge the fatal secret of which we are the present depositaries. That they are perfectly trustworthy I have little doubt, but they need not be implicated in the grave perils with which we are environed."

He paused ; all seemed by their looks to yield assent to what he had proposed, but the silence remained unbroken.

"The most important consideration," resumed the Father, "remains to be discussed ; but in a matter where the lives of all are in equal jeopardy, I wish to be understood as not venturing to advise others, but simply expressing my own individual opinion. You, my generous friend and benefactor, are the proprietor of this mansion, and should therefore more fitly pronounce upon the course to be

adopted, where your life and your estate are both at issue: you, my daughters, who from your youth may well look forward to many, many years of happiness, should not be influenced by the decision of an infirm old man, whose mortal career is well nigh ended, and to whom, therefore, it can matter little whether his aged head be laid in the dust a few months sooner or later. Speaking, however, for myself alone, and not without such self-communing and prayer as the time would allow, I will unequivocally declare, that considering the calamity which first threw this unfortunate traveller upon our protection and mercy, as well as the mental derangement that made him the unconscious revealer of his own secret, it were base and unworthy of us, either as Christians or as fellow-creatures, to betray him to certain destruction, to have him rudely torn from beneath our roof in his present piteous plight, and to give him up to a public, ignominious, and cruel death."

"Death!" cried Edith with a faint shriek,

“ Oh gracious Heaven ! they should tear me first into ten thousand pieces ! ” And she sunk shuddering and gasping into the arms of Agatha, who supported her upon her bosom, and looked earnestly at her father, as if waiting to hear his sentiments before she delivered her own.

“ For my own sake, but still more for yours,” said Mr. Shelton, “ I would most gladly have avoided this perilous predicament ; but it has not been of our seeking, it has been the pure result of accident, our ill-starred guest was no party to it, and has evinced nothing but a generous anxiety, even at his own risk, to relieve us from all responsibility. Conscience, duty, humanity, every thing therefore forbids us to sacrifice him. The hazards we incur are imminent, deadly ; but come what may, I will not have my name coupled with cowardice and dishonour,—I will never, never consent to the treachery of giving him up.”

“ My father, my noble-minded father ! ” exclaimed Agatha, seizing her parent’s hand and

pressing it to her throbbing heart, "I am proud, delighted, to follow your example, and to share your perils. Give him up! surrender this generous, high-souled man!—perish the thought! which of us would not rather die than be guilty of such mean-spirited perfidy? No—we will watch over him; we will effect his cure; we will accomplish his escape, and it will be a lasting subject of congratulation to us hereafter, that we have dared at all risks to do our duty to an afflicted fellow-creature."

"God grant it, my child! God grant it!" ejaculated Mr. Shelton, tenderly embracing his daughter—"It is at least some security that we can implicitly trust one another, though I am not the less sorry that your young friend, whose delicate health little qualifies her for such agitating scenes, should have become involved in our troubles."

"Fear not for me, Sir," said Edith—"in such a cause I feel that I could undertake or endure any thing. They shall cut my heart out before I reveal a syllable of our secret."

“ I am not surprised,” said Father Bartholomew, who, though superior to most of his order upon essential points, retained many touches of their trifling superstition — “ I am not surprised at this untoward occurrence — I have anticipated some misfortune ever since the picture of St. Agatha fell from the wall as I was kneeling before it in our little chapel. I will again betake myself to my prayers on the same spot, imploring the intercession of the Saint to deliver us from our perils, and in the meanwhile I commit my patient to your care. Return, some of you, to his apartment, watch beside him, and give me immediate notice should my presence be required.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Out of the hopes of these aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen ; from shore to shore,
Doctrines of human power my words have told,
'They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gain'd, or ever lost of yore.

SHELLEY'S *Revolt of Islam*.

As the patient in his light-headed moods repeatedly mentioned the name of his father, and expressed an earnest wish to see him, Agatha suggested to Mr. Shelton the propriety of writing a cautious letter to Sir Miles Forester, who resided in the neighbourhood, to inform him of his son's alarming state. "Perhaps he may assist us in effecting his recovery and escape," she observed ; "perhaps they may have communi-

cations to make to one another of an urgent and important nature ; at all events, we are scarcely warranted, considering the sufferer's precarious plight, in not affording him the consolation of an interview with his parent."

"I differ from you, my child," said Mr. Shelton : "little attention is due to these delirious exclamations, nor do you know the character of Sir Miles Forester. Timid and avaricious, he dreads nothing so much as being compromised in any way by the machinations of his son, whom he has long since discarded, and with whom he so studiously refuses to hold communication, that if he recognizes his hand-writing in the address of a letter, he sends it unopened to the Government, not, however, from loyalty, but from a dastardly and sordid spirit. Nor would any circumstance induce him to visit Hales Court, for, alas ! he cherishes so blind and bitter a hatred against all of our persuasion, that he has been heard to declare he would rather lose a leg than cross the threshold of a Catholic. Public report has made me in some

degree acquainted with the character of his son, our unfortunate inmate, and all that I know heightens the deep commiseration he inspires, while it increases the imminency of the danger we incur by harbouring him. That he is possessed of every virtue of private life none seem to deny ; but even his friends admit that his enthusiasm for liberty and a reform of the government, hurries him into enterprises not only rash, but desperate ; while the generosity with which he is ever ready to sacrifice his own life to save that of his colleagues, has been termed romantic and extravagant. Young as he is, he has already experienced many hair-breadth 'scapes ; and God grant, for all our sakes, that the same good fortune may attend him in his present perils ! Much, much would I have given to avoid his being brought beneath our roof ; but being thus thrown upon our protection and mercy, I cannot, will not have his blood upon my head. We will perform our duty, and we must trust the rest to Heaven."

This description of Stanley Forester, (for we

may henceforward assign to him his real name,) rather enhanced than diminished the interest that Agatha and Edith had previously taken in his fate. The virtues conceded to him did not appeal in vain to their hearts, while his faults of an undue temerity in advancing schemes which he doubtless considered patriotic and salutary, and of an over-generosity in perilling himself to protect others, were delinquencies little calculated to find disfavour in a female bosom. The fair friends could talk of nothing but his youth, his magnanimity, his perils, and his adventures, all of which being invested with a more extraordinary character from their contrast with his present deplorable and helpless situation, imparted a still tenderer interest to their feelings, and conferred a higher charm upon his society. Their assiduities were now obliged to be almost unremitting, since the servants were not allowed to participate in them, though Mr. Shelton and Father Bartholomew, the latter of whom slept in the sick-room, took their full share in the fatigues of attendance.

Arduous were their duties, great their anxieties, many their misgivings, sometimes amounting to a total abandonment of all hope in the patient's recovery ; ineffable, therefore, was the delight of the whole party, when, after having been delirious for several days, he awoke one morning with recovered faculties, and such an amended pulse, that the good Father thought he might safely pronounce him out of all immediate danger. Edith, delicate as she was, had borne all the previous exertions of body and harass of mind without flinching, but when she witnessed this sudden confirmation of all her hopes and wishes, when with a smile of grateful intelligence the convalescent took her hand and Agatha's, pressed them alternately to his lips, and called upon God to bless and reward them both, her feelings utterly overpowered her, she was obliged to hurry away to conceal her emotions, and upon reaching her own apartment was seized with one of those hysterical fits to which she was subject upon any vehement excitement. Agatha's self-possession did not desert her, but her

heart, by its violent fluttering, betrayed its own secret, and had she not left the room to attend upon Edith, it might have become as impossible to conceal the agitation of her joy from others as from herself.

But however satisfactory to all parties might be the prospect of the patient's recovery, it came not unattended with cause for fresh and deep anxiety, since there was every reason to apprehend that the place of his retreat was suspected, if not known, and that Hales Court was beset with spies. The servants reported that on two succeeding nights, just as the family were about to retire to bed, they had discovered a stranger lurking under the parlour casement, as if for the purpose of listening to the conversation within; while upon another occasion they had seen a man perched in the elm tree in the dusk of evening, and peering cautiously through the window of the sick gentleman's apartment. The latter trespasser they had nearly secured, but he had contrived to make his escape into the plantations, not, however, until they had as-

certained that he was dressed in laced clothes; from which circumstance, as well as from the correspondence of figure and appearance, they were led to conclude that he was the identical gentleman who, by the postman's account, had waylaid him for some mornings past, and insisted upon reading the superscription of all the letters he was bearing to the house. From various other sources they also learnt that blind rumours were afloat of some mysterious inmate concealed, and of dangerous plots secretly hatching at Hales Court; tidings, it was intimated, which had already excited the attention of the Magistrates, and were by no means unlikely to terminate in search warrants and inquisitorial visits.

Feeling, therefore, that no time was to be lost, Mr. Shelton betook himself to the sick room, sat himself down by the side of the invalid, and requesting him not to be alarmed at the communication he was about to make, revealed to him, that in his moments of delirium he had

himself betrayed that his name was Stanley Forester.

“ You need not start, Sir,” he continued—
“ you need not eye me with such suspicion. Unfortunately, we are all of us aware, as who indeed is *not*? that you have been proclaimed, that a reward has been offered for your apprehension; we are conscious of the capital penalty we are encountering, for we have none of us forgot the executions of Mrs. Gaunt and Lady Lisle; but we have all come to the solemn and irrevocable determination to put our own lives in jeopardy rather than to sacrifice yours by giving you up; an act of positive cruelty and treachery which we hold in greater abhorrence than any contingent perils we can possibly encounter.”

He then proceeded to urge the necessity of his making his escape with the least possible delay, recapitulating the circumstances from which they suspected the house to be beleaguered by a spy, and not forgetting to men-

tion a vow made by Edith Colyton, that, since she had in the first instance been happily instrumental in preserving him, she would not quit Hales Court until his escape had been accomplished.

“ Generous, affectionate girl !” ejaculated Forrester—“ who could have expected such firmness and courage in one so delicate and apparently so timid ? From your daughter, from that incomparable wonder of her sex, no act of magnanimity, however incredible, would surprise me ; for grandeur and elevation of soul are seen in every feature of her noble countenance, while even her majestic form seems to give assurance that she is incapable of an ignoble action. But why should I make any distinctions ? you have been all equally brave, generous and humane,—the gentle Edith Colyton, your exalted daughter, yourself, and that truly Christian priest, Father Bartholomew, to whom I am not only indebted for my recovered health, but for the cure of my ignorant and undistinguishing prejudice against

his order. Mr. Shelton, you are perhaps astonished at the calmness with which I speak; I am surprised at it myself, for my feelings are usually ardent and impetuous, even to excess. It is said that small griefs are loud, while greater ones are silent. So must it be with benefits received, and this will explain why I am so overwhelmed, so oppressed, so stupified with the weight of my obligations as to be utterly incapable of adequately expressing my gratitude. I will not even attempt it, but I must, I will endeavour to show by my actions that I am not altogether unworthy of your inappreciable kindness. Oh these letters, these important letters!"—he continued, taking them from his pocket-book, and tearing them into minute particles as he spake—"I would almost have lost my right hand if so I might have delivered them safely; but it cannot be, and though they are written in cypher, I will place them beyond the possibility of detection. Let these fragments, I beseech you, be committed to the flames. If I am not heard of, dupli-

cates will be sent by some more fortunate hand, and the great and glorious work will prosper, though I be sacrificed in its cause, and live not to see its consummation. There! the last of these papers is destroyed; and now, Mr. Shelton—now that I have nothing about me that I care to lose, for my life I have never valued, except inasmuch as it might benefit my country—now do I earnestly, imperatively call upon you to perform your duty; the duty that you owe to yourself, to your reverend kinsman, to your daughter, to Edith Colyton.”

“I do not comprehend you—I thought I had already discharged my duty;—what should I do farther?”

“Surrender me up to justice, or rather to the Government! This is your bounden duty as a subject, as a neighbour, as a father, as a man. Nay, Sir, hear me out—I honour you for that recoiling movement, for that look of abhorrence at the proposition;—but, gracious Heaven! am I, in return for the life you have preserved, to place yours, and that of all your family, in peril of the hangman? Away,

away with such a hideous thought ! You have done all that humanity required of you ; more, infinitely more than any other would have performed. Mr. Shelton ! I entreat, I adjure you by all that you hold dear, to give me up ; and if you will not yield to my supplications, pardon me when I say that I command your compliance, and that I must, I *will* be obeyed. I would voluntarily surrender myself, but that this would not answer the purpose, for, should it be discovered where I have been harboured, your lives would still be forfeit : so will they remain if I make my escape. There is no certain means of safety for you and yours but in your publicly and instantly giving me up to the law ; and upon this, therefore, I peremptorily insist.”

“ Never, never ! ” exclaimed Mr. Shelton with an indignant energy ; “ we have all of us solemnly vowed that we will not have your blood upon our heads.”

“ My death may not be so certain as you imagine ; for, though I have no hope, scarcely a

wish for pardon, I am not without the chances of deliverance. My colleagues are numerous and powerful; I have the means of bribery to almost any extent; nor am I unpractised in effecting my own escape from prison."

"This will not extenuate the guilt, the cruelty, the cowardice of our giving you up."

Forester persisted with an increased energy of purpose, sometimes imploring, sometimes commanding; but his companion remained immovable, declaring, that if he himself were base enough to consent—a thought which he rejected with scorn, none of the partners in his responsibility would imitate, or ever forgive his dastardly conduct. After this generous contest had lasted some time, Forester yielded a reluctant acquiescence in his friend's proposal that he should remain in the house till the coming night, when his strength would be sufficiently recruited to allow him to make his way to the coast, which was at no great distance, and search for a vessel to convey him beyond sea. "I would gladly have detained you," said Mr.

Shelton, "till your health was more firmly established; but the suspicious appearances to which I have adverted, warn us to be as prompt as your infirm state will allow; and as an additional precaution against any surprise, I have had you removed into this bed-room, the advantage of which I will now disclose to you. At the end of this dark closet is a secret door; it opens by pressing your hand against the ceiling, and leads by a few steps down to the shrubbery, which in this part comes up to the very walls of the house. Should any unwelcome visitants present themselves at Hales Court before night, you will of course have instant notice, when you can by this means elude the strictest search within the house. Only remember to shut the door after you, and we must subsequently commit you to those talents for escape, of which you have just been boasting."

With these words he hastily withdrew, as if to avoid the acknowledgments of his guest, who being now left to his own reflections, weighed over in his mind their recent colloquy, not with-

out self-condemnation at his yielding to the solicitations of Mr. Shelton. "The more generous the conduct of this family," he whispered to himself, "the less do I stand excused for thus endangering them. Heavens! why should such precious lives be implicated with mine—my noble-minded host, his venerable and exemplary kinsman, the affectionate Edith Colyton, the magnanimous, the glorious, the sublime Agatha, for whom alone I would sacrifice myself a thousand times over! Who and what am I, compared to these my illustrious benefactors? I ought not to have consented—I should have insisted upon their giving me up." In such reflections he remained for a considerable time immersed, when his reveries were interrupted by the entrance of Father Bartholomew, coming, as he said, to relieve guard at the request of his kinsman, who had just gone out to visit a neighbour. Forester, observing that they might not often meet again, since he was to quit the house at night, poured forth the most animated and heartfelt gratitude for the

skill and good offices to which he stood indebted for his recovery, as well as for the Father's devotedness in sheltering him at such imminent risk to himself; requesting, as a final favour, that he might be furnished with the materials for writing a letter, which was of the utmost importance, and could not be delayed. These being readily supplied, he endited a note, and having carefully enveloped and sealed it, delivered it to his companion, saying, "You will oblige me, good Father, beyond all expression, by delivering this with your own hands, a favour which I would not presume to ask unless its contents were of the deepest importance. Nor will it occupy you long, being addressed, as you may perceive, to Sir Halsewell Tynte, a loyal magistrate, whose residence is within an easy walk. You need not await the return of Mr. Shelton, for this is an affair that will not brook delay; nay, prythee do not hesitate, but, if you wish to make an inestimable addition to the obligations you have already conferred, you will become the instant bearer of this letter. I

pledge my soul that it contains nothing to implicate you, but rather that which may prove of vital consequence to your common safety."

"I believe it, my son, I believe it; after what has passed, it is impossible that you could wish to injure us, and I will therefore comply with your request."

"Heaven bless you, good Father, for your kindness! Speed instantly, I implore you, and quit not his house till you have seen Sir Halsewell."

Father Bartholomew left the room, and Forrester remained for some time in a state of high but glad excitement, watching from the window the progress of his messenger along the road, till the trees hid him from sight, when he returned to the sofa, and indulged complacently in the delicious hope, that whatever might happen to himself, the friends who had so generously protected him would now be skreened from all danger. His thoughts were reverting to Agatha, when she unexpectedly entered the apartment, and he started up, exclaiming with anima-

ted looks, "Oh, Miss Shelton ! how delighted am I to see you ! Fortune is propitious to me this morning ; I was just longing for your presence, and, lo ! my aspirations are no sooner formed than gratified. If, in addition to your other manifold acts of kindness, you can favour me with your attention for a few minutes, it will deeply gratify me, for I have a communication to make, which it much imports me that you should hear, and my time is getting short, shorter perhaps than you imagine."

Surprised into some little fluttering of the heart at this exordium, and scarcely knowing what reply to make to it, Agatha drew a chair, bowed with one of her usual smiles of placid suavity, and seated herself in silence.

"I have this morning taken a step," resumed Forester, "that relieves me from much of the restraint and compulsory concealment which have hitherto sealed my lips. Nothing that I may now divulge can implicate you any farther. Thank Heaven ! the generous inmates of Hales Court are safe—their loyalty cannot be im-

peached, not even suspected. What may become of myself is comparatively unimportant; but I would not willingly perish with any unmerited imputations upon my character; I would not go down into the grave without at least vindicating my fair fame to Miss Shelton. You are entitled to this explanation; you and your most amiable friend preserved me, and brought me hither, under circumstances of mystery that might well have justified suspicion as to my real name and station. I might have been an adventurer, nay, a criminal—I dared not reveal who or what I was; but I am now free, and though, in the defence I am about to make, I may confess myself to be a political outlaw—if the sacred name of law can be applied to the monstrous tyranny of the present government—yet am I not without hopes that you will deem me a venial transgressor, entitled, perhaps, rather to rank as a patriotic benefactor than as a traitor to that country for which I have ever been ready to shed the last drop of my blood.—Never, my dear Miss Shelton—pardon me that

inadvertent phrase—God knows you will always be most dear to me, and yet I meant not to use such liberty of speech :—Never, Miss Shelton, from the days of my youth upward, have I ceased to dwell with the whole intensity of an ardent enthusiastic heart upon the oppression and degradation of my beloved Country. That England, which Nature meant to be the glorious and the free, the queen of arts and arms, the regent of the ocean, and the paragon of the world, should become a scoff and a by-word to the nations ; that she should be given up to the dominion of royal harlots and favourites until she was defiled with the moral leprosy of universal depravity and corruption ; that she should be so crushed, so humbled, as to be invaded and insulted by those whom she once spurned as the weakest and most contemptible of her enemies : these, and the thousand other indignities she suffered, preyed deeply and incessantly upon my soul, depriving me of rest by night or day, until I made a solemn, irrevocable vow that I would dedicate my life, my fortune, and all the energies

of my head and heart, to the great work of her political regeneration. I have been tauntingly told that we should have had recourse to none but constitutional measures for effecting this object. Self-refuting insult! when Parliaments are denied us, and we have been robbed of the constitution. Great were the struggles I was now compelled to undergo in various ways, but none so trying as the reproaches and the alienation of a previously affectionate father. He discarded and disinherited me — a blow which I felt only in the deprivation of his attachment, for my own fortune was sufficient for my wants, and my Country had now become my father. I joined a band of illustrious malcontents, among whom were enrolled the Duke of Monmouth, Lords Russell and Essex, Algernon Sydney, John Hampden, all of whom had sworn to obtain a redress of grievances, and were prepared as patriots to die, if requisite, in the endeavour: but it is unnecessary, either for them or for myself, that I should disavow all participation in the Rye-House Plot, and the unjustifiable

schemes of the vulgar desperadoes who projected it. Our enterprise was discovered, I myself was arrested and thrown into prison, whence I contrived to escape, made my way to Holland, and there learnt the execution of Lord Russell, Algernon Sydney, and several more of my unfortunate confederates, as well as that my own name was in a proclamation, and a reward offered for my apprehension. Grieved but not dismayed, eager to avenge my slaughtered friends, those martyrs of liberty, and determined never to abandon the cause of my country, I subsequently joined the Duke of Monmouth in his invasion, trusting to his solemn protestations, that he came to restore the constitution, and vindicate our insulted liberties. When he threw off the mask, when he proclaimed himself King, I instantly upbraided him with falsehood, and left his standard, for I knew that the country could gain nothing by exchanging a legitimate for an illegitimate profligate, who had moreover betrayed his incompetency from the first moment of his land-

ing. Again did I find my way to the Continent ; and since that period, never abandoning the hope of regenerating my country, never relaxing for a single day in the performance of the vow by which I had devoted myself to that object, I have not only traversed several parts of Europe, securing friends or negotiating leagues and alliances, but I have in various disguises made repeated expeditions to England for the same object. Of my strange adventures in these perilous visits, of my hairbreadth 'scapes from prison and other beleaguements, some of which have been almost as romantic as a fairy tale, I will not speak. Good fortune, and the indomitable enthusiasm of my disposition, have carried me through every thing, although at times I have been vain or sanguine enough to imagine that I bear a charmed life, that I have been predestined to the great work I have undertaken, and shall live to witness its successful accomplishment. Fond, but delusive dreams ! which the next twelve hours will probably dissipate for ever !

“ When I last landed in England, I was accompanied by two gallant and valued friends, whose names I am not at liberty to entrust, even to your ear.”

“ I suspect,” said Agatha, “ that in your illness you have unconsciously betrayed them, as you did your own, for you made frequent and anxious allusion to your friends Sidney and Herbert, often rejoicing in their safety.”

“ Ha ! my reason must have wandered widely, or ere I could have implicated those whom I love dearer than myself. Let those names, I entreat you, remain for ever undivulged ! It was at their suggestion that I assumed the garb in which you found me, and which it may perhaps have baffled your conjectures to explain. When Ferguson, Monmouth’s most obnoxious partisan, found the gates of the town in which he had taken refuge, closed against him, and a strict search making for his apprehension, he betook himself to the asylum of the public prison, well knowing it to be the only place in which he was not likely to be sought. This

furnished the hint of my disguise. In an apparent servant of the present government, openly habited in its livery, no one could expect to find Stanley Forester, a proclaimed traitor and outlaw, and I therefore assumed the green uniform and silver greyhound worn by the King's Messengers: a disguise which at a distance from the metropolis was not only safe but serviceable, enabling me often to get a horse, when I might have been otherwise detained. Behold, however, how failure and disaster may spring from our best contrivances! It was owing to my ostensible character of a messenger that I procured the fine but ill-starred animal that occasioned my accident in Goat-hurst-wood, and may probably, notwithstanding all your kindness, eventually cost me my life! The brave and generous friends whose names I will not again mention, may accuse themselves as having contributed, although thus remotely, to my death. But why should they grieve—why should you, or I, or any one repine at it? I shall not die, but live for ever; for my name,

which in a few years would have been utterly forgotten, shall now be eternally embalmed in the recollection of posterity, and liberty, like religion, shall flourish and survive in the blood of its martyrs. Yes, England shall show that she was not created to be a land of slaves; that her sons were not destined to become the patrimony of bigots and tyrants. I see them, I see them now, the future generations of free-born Britons! The fire of generous liberty blazes in their eyes, they bring their children to my tomb, they join their uplifted hands together, and hark! they chant in chorus a patriotic hymn, until earth and sky and the whole surrounding welkin echo to the name of Stanley Forester! Oh, Miss Shelton! this is not death, this is not obscurity and oblivion, but fame, triumph, glory, an everlasting apotheosis!"

The enthusiast paused; his inflamed countenance, his bickering eyes, and the perspiration upon his features, attesting the deep energy of his feelings, and accounting for the momentary exhaustion under which he seemed to suffer.

“ Indeed, indeed, Sir, this exertion is too much for you,” said Agatha ; “ your strength will not allow such high excitement, and I entreat you to be more composed. I reverence the exalted principles by which you are actuated. I admire your ardour, your noble daring, your generous patriotism ; but surely, surely, Sir, this is a most perilous career, and I cannot bear to think——Pardon me, Mr. Forrester, it is not from inattention to your most interesting history that I do not allude to it, but my feelings, my deep anxiety must first be satisfied upon another point. Tell me, I implore you, why have you adverted to some imminent and instant danger ? why have you spoken of your doom, as about to be shortly and fatally sealed, even within the next twelve hours, when at present every thing seems propitious to your escape, and you have no reason whatever to anticipate any discontinuance of that marvellous good fortune which has hitherto befriended you ? I should assign it to the despondency occasioned by sickness, but that your

buoyant and elastic spirit seems to be unconquerable."

"It is not despondency," said Forester, in an altered and a serious voice; "but my knowledge of facts, which to you are undivulged. Let them for the present remain so. Events will shortly give an answer to your question; but ere those events occur—oh, Miss Shelton! will you pardon the presumption of a dying man?—you start at the word, but you must prepare yourself for this catastrophe; since I shall go, and nothing can prevent it, from Hales Court to prison, and from the prison to a scaffold! Let, then, the privilege of a doomed man plead my excuse, if I declare that your charms and endowments, that your beauty and magnanimity—in short, that I adore you with the whole rich idolatry of a young and ardent heart that has never yet loved another."

"Oh, Mr. Forester! why should you thus agitate——are you aware——?"

"Yes, I am aware of all—I know that I am a proclaimed traitor and outlaw—disinherited,

discarded, dishonoured, if to be a patriot be a stigma, and that at this instant I stand with one foot upon the scaffold. For such a condemned being to declare that he loves Miss Shelton, is indeed an act of unparalleled audacity; but I could not refrain from the confession; it is a consolation to me to have made it, and perhaps it may be deemed some atonement of my offence that I shall shortly bless her name, and implore her forgiveness with my dying breath."

"Do not, do not talk with such a terrible serenity of your approaching death," exclaimed Agatha, too much shocked and agitated even to notice his declaration of love. "I shudder all over at the very thought: and why should you harp upon it so distressingly? Nothing seems likely to impede your safe retirement from Hales Court; and even should dangers beset you, why may you not be rescued from them by the same good angel who has hitherto preserved you in extremities still more desperate."

“ My past escapes diminish my present chance, and I fear but little respite will be allowed me. And yet deliverance is never impossible — I may again elude the vigilance of my gaolers—once more I may recross the seas, to return and witness the emancipation of my country—and oh, Miss Shelton! should such an event occur; should my vow be accomplished; should the liberties and constitution of England be assured to her; should I indeed live to present myself before you, not as an alien and an outcast, not as a disinherited and disguised wanderer, but honoured by my King, reconciled to my father, respected by the brave and the good, and elated by the honest pride of having contributed to re-establish the civil and religious freedom of my native land—then, then with what ineffable delight should I hasten to throw myself at your feet, and tender to you a heart, which, however unalterably it may be devoted to you, it were now superfluous and almost insulting to offer.”

“ These are dreams, visions of enthusiasm,

and I know not why you have indulged in them," said Agatha, blushing with much confusion, and preparing to quit the room.

"Because it would comfort me on the scaffold if I perish; it would cheer me in my exile if I escape; it would support my heart in every struggle, might I be assured that I have awakened an interest in your bosom."

"I will not utter an untruth," said Agatha, after a momentary irresolution—"especially if the confession of attachment—if my regard, I mean, can afford you the solace you state; but you must be aware, Sir, that these are empty words—that it is utterly unavailing ——"

"A thousand, thousand blessings on you for this kind admission! Oh, call them not empty words; for to me they are ineffably, inestimably precious, even for present support; and if, in the contingency that I have fondly ventured to anticipate, I might be allowed to hope ——"

"I would not deprive any one of hope, the great balm of life; but I repeat, Sir, that these imaginings are dreams and visions to which I

must not any longer listen.”—So saying, she withdrew the hand which Forester had respectfully pressed to his lips, and hurried out of the apartment with a more blushing agitation than any into which her customary self-possession had hitherto been surprised.

“ If I live to accomplish my vow, and break the chains of my countrymen,” exclaimed Forester—“ such only shall be my day-dreams. Till then, England ! my poor enslaved, but still beloved country ! be thou my mistress ! be thou the companion of my bosom ! the chosen one of my soul ! the arbiter of my fate ! ”

CHAPTER IX.

Yet I wonder much
At the strange desperation of these men,
That dare attempt such acts here in our state :
He could not 'scape that did it—
Were he known.—

Impossible.—

It would be known, Melantius.

If he gets then away,
He must wear all our lives upon his sword.

The Maid's Tragedy.

WHILE affairs were thus situated at Hales Court, the humble cottage of the Chervils was the scene of a solemn investigation, occasioned mainly by their own idle babbling about the occurrence in Goathurst-wood, and the alarming or fantastical additions made to it by the gossips

of the neighbourhood. At this juncture the whole country was in a ferment; rumours of invasion were openly circulated; the Protestants, owing to the insane measures of the government, were inflamed to the last degree against the Catholics; disturbances, although quickly suppressed, had broken out in various quarters, and the magistrates and public functionaries, anxious to show their loyalty until they could safely avow their disaffection, were upon the *qui vive* in all directions, arresting doubtful characters wherever they appeared, and proceeding against them with unusual rigour in order to remove suspicion from themselves. The Mayor of Bridgwater, sharing that profound horror of Popish plots with which the wiseacres of the West were insanified, had no sooner learnt that a disguised Catholic, for thus ran the rumour, had been conveyed under mysterious circumstances to Hales Court, where he was carefully concealed even from the domestics, than he thought it his bounden duty to institute an official enquiry into the affair.

Dinner was just concluded at the farm, the labourers had returned to the field, Meg was busy clearing away, the humming and whirring of the wheel announced that the indefatigable grandmother had resumed her employment, her husband, old Jan, was sitting in the sun, with his hands and his chin supported upon his crutch-headed stick, gazing at nothing at all, and thinking upon the same subject; Madge was feeding the pigs, the children and dogs were dispersed about, and the farmer, leaning on his weeding-hoe at the door, was preparing to follow his men, when to his no small surprise he saw a carriage stop at the end of the narrow road that led to the farm. Still greater was his amazement at observing several persons alight from it with an apparent intention of coming up to the house, a phenomenon that occasioned him to call loudly for Madge to assist him if possible in explaining the prodigy.

“Why, shower as a gun,” cried the dame, shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, “thic be his worship, tha Mayor o’ Bedgwater !

I mind 'n by's 'broider'd yaller waistcoat, his red vace, and tha strouting walk he ha' got, vor all tha wordle like our old gannycok."

"And yonner be Sir Halsewell Tynte o' Goathurst; and lockyzee, Madge! tutheram, in tha girt cock'd hat, be Sir Vrancis Warre o' Hestercombe. Mercy on us all! what's in tha wind now, I wonner."

"And thicky there, Tummas, tha hodmedod chap in tha black clawthes and tha powdery wig, be lawyer Watchet; and thick scrawvlin trubagully wi's hat in one hon, and a blue bag in t'other, be his clerk, I do suppaws."

"Should'n wonner, Madge, begunmers! but shower they must be all in a mizmaze, and ha' coom to tha wrong houze, vor, Lors a mercy! what can they ha' to zay to we? We dwon't owe nobody a nought, and we ha'n't a dood no harm to norra one, and we baint Papishes, tha Lord be praised therevor!"

"How Lawyer Watchet do peer about 'n, dwon't he?" cried Madge. "Ah, lawyer! vor all thee beest so 'cute, thee casn't untang tha

gate, I zee, nor vind how to draw back tha 'ooden haps. Aw ! thee 'st dood it now, hast !”

By this time the greater part of the family had assembled to gaze at such an unprecedented apparition, the sandy-headed children with their arms folded over their eyes, Margaret screening hers with a cabbage-leaf, while old Jan, fixing his spectacles to his nose, and dropping his lower jaw, peered at the visitants with a look of bewildered vacancy. Exclamations of surprise and alarm burst from all, except Madge, for the rest of the family, none of whom had forgotten the fearful inquisitions after Monmouth's rebellion, could not but anticipate danger and evil from such a portentous visit as that of a mayor, two magistrates, a lawyer, and his clerk. Madge, however, after having listened to their various conjectures and misgivings with a smile of the most significant complacency, at length exclaimed in a contemptuous tone,—“Aw ! a pretty set o' gawcums ye be, all o' ye, to make a gallibagger o' theezam gennelmen cooming ta zee us. Fags ! ye 're a 'cute crew, baint ye

now? What! ye can't guess their errand, hey? Hold your vlothar and your duddering then, and I'se tell ye. Why, they ha' heard tell of our Ned's piece o' writing, and ha' coom auver fro' Bedgwater ta zee it. That's my verdict, Tummas, and therevore I zay 't."

"Shood'n wonner, Madge," said the acquiescent husband, with an anxious look, however, that betokened very little confidence in the dame's prediction. As the party approached, headed by the bustling little lawyer, dame Chervil advanced towards them, passed their professional leader without deigning him any obeisance, and dropping a profound curtsy to each of the dignitaries, exclaimed, "Your Honour's zervant to command, Mr. Mayor; tha zame to your good Worship, Sir Halsewell; and ta you, Sir Vrancis, and many thanks vor tha honour ye be adooing us. Aw, but I do knaw what ye be coom about, and zo I told my gaffer, didn' I, Tummas? Shower, zays I, sich desperd girt volk don't go trapesing and vocating about vor anaught, zeeing whereby ye ha'

got lawyer Watchet by your side, but Madge Chervil can zee as vur into a mile stwon as anorra, amaybe, and zo I zoon vund out that ye ha' coom to zee our Ned's piece of writing. Well, just step auver the drashel, gennelmen, and I'll show it ye, but ye can't zee Ned, tha more's tha pity, bin' he be gwone to Farmer Seeley's to help diggy his muck-yard a voot or two lower, that he may ha' a better fall vor his slush and slotter, and such like. Howsomdever, gif ye want Ned to write or to summy vor ye, an ye 'o'nt zoon vind sich anorra, a b'leeve, tha bwoy shall like auver to Bedgwater this a'ternoon."

All this was delivered with such a smirking, simpering complacency, accompanied by numerous profound curtsies, that the Mayor and his friends were half disposed to set her down for a simpleton. Lawyer Watchet, however, being better informed upon this point, exclaimed with a consequential look and tone, "Woman! woman! this fetch won't serve your turn, so give us no more of your prevaricating nonsense. We come not to see your son or any of his school-

boy scribbling, but to examine yourself and your husband, and to take depositions touching the disguised horseman whom you picked up in Goathurst-wood, and whom we shrewdly suspect to be a Popish Emissary."

"Lockyzee! ye dwon't zay zo!" ejaculated Madge, a most rueful and chopfallen expression succeeding to that conceited, knowing air she had previously displayed. As she slunk back towards the house, Watchet kept close at her heels, in order to follow up his blow, for he saw that she was intimidated; but a grey, gaunt, ragged old sheep dog opposed his progress with such hostile manifestations, that the terrified lawyer made a snatch at old Jan's crutch-headed stick to defend himself.

"Thee sha'tn't ha' it," cried the old man, clutching it, and struggling to retain it. "Thee sha'tn't ha' it, tell ye, not till ye cut my hors off: it long'd to mother and grammer, and I 'on't part wi't, no, not vor all tha lawyers in England."

This resolution he would probably have made good, had the struggle been prolonged,

but the farmer calling off his dog, which retired growling into the garden, Watchet relinquished his hold, and stepped into the house, followed by the Mayor and the two magistrates. The party being seated, and the clerk having placed himself at a table, upon which he had deposited an inkstand with papers and a minute-book, Watchet was about to begin the examination in due form, when he suggested that the junior children, who were huddled up in a corner of the room staring at the visitants, should be previously removed, lest they should interrupt the proceedings by their noise.

“What! d’ye mean Bill, and Sal, and Bessy?” inquired the mother—“Lors love ye, Lawyer Watchet, they be the quietest chillern in all England, when my gaffer d’won’t spwile ’em. They ’ll be as silent as if they were listening to a sarment. Sal, you worky your sampler, or else I’se gee summat ye ’on’t ax me vor. Bill, and Bessy, tha first o’ ye that speaks aught shall ha’ a snock upon tha snowl, zo mind what I do zay to ye.”

Awed by this threat, the youngsters put on their most serious looks, and conducted themselves in a very decorous and orderly manner during the first part of the examination, until Sally, who was more intent upon Sir Halsewell's fine wig and laced coat than her work, suddenly uttered a shrill cry, followed by the exclamation of, "O Lockadaisy! deary me! I ha' run tha niddle smack into my vinger, and tha blood be beskummer'd all over tha sampler."

Remedies being quickly applied to this slight wound by the scolding and yet anxious mother, the child was pacified, and the investigation proceeded for some time without other interruption than occasional remarks of no very complimentary nature from Watchet, who because the deponents, frightened into a strict adherence to veracity, would not confirm any of the ridiculous stories that had become current, suspected them of shuffling, and sought to elicit additional facts by multiplying questions, and threatening all the penalties of the law against prevaricators. Hitherto the young folks, surprised by the no-

velty and serious nature of the proceedings into a hushed observation, had been remarkably well-behaved ; but as this impression wore off, they began first to play, and then to quarrel with one another in so audible a manner, that Watchet, who was a very consequential and *fussy* little personage, insisted upon their being turned out of the room.

“ Lors love ye !” cried the mother, “ dwon’t ye be so begrumped, tward’n but a little rum-pus they made, and chillern will be forween’d ’now and tan.” Turning towards the offenders with an angry look, she continued, “ Dwon’t make thic noise, tell ye ; why cas’n’t ’have your-sels ? Ye were quiet enow yesterday all the time Meg was a reading tha Bible to your gram-fer.”

“ Ees, mother,” cried Bill sulkily, “ cause ye gee us zome cawld apple dumpling.”

“ Sim to me ye be always a munching,” said Madge, who, as she really spoilt her children, though she accused her husband of the same mismanagement, went to a cupboard, took out

some remains of the before-mentioned edible, and set them before the youngsters with a horn of milk and water, threatening them with severe punishment if they gave any farther cause of offence. Once more the examination proceeded, undisturbed except by Madge herself, who, instead of replying to some critical question, would now and then turn to the juvenile party and exclaim,—“ Billy, dwon’t ye gulch your vittles so vast, there’s a good bwoy ! Sal ! castn’t drink athout guddling o’ thic fashion. Bessy ! dwon’t make sich a smashing and smacking ;—eat’n up in a jiffey, tell ye, or ye ’on’t adood avore Kirsmas.” Watchet, impatient as he was at these instances of disrespect towards his own dignity and that of his august clients, submitted to them with tolerable patience, until himself and his magisterial friends, and indeed the whole company, were startled by a piercing shriek from Billy, followed by a loud blubbering exclamation of “ Oh la ! Oh la ! O my ! O my ! I’ve bit my tongue !”

Even Madge seemed now convinced that no

farther compromise could be expected, and she therefore huddled the urchins out of the apartment as fast as she could, Billy roaring all the while, and keeping his mouth wide open, to the display of its unmasticated contents, as if he had made up his mind never to renew the operation of chewing at the risk of mistaking his tongue for apple dumpling. On the mother's re-appearance, the proceedings were brought to a close, the depositions were finished, and the visitants, the most unwelcome that had ever crossed the threshold of the farm, returned to their carriage. Disappointed as they were that the more marvellous and alarming portion of the rumours should be refuted by the statement of the Chervils, it was agreed *nem. con.* that there were still abundant grounds for apprehending the supposed delinquent, which they accordingly determined to do as soon as they should have reinforced themselves with all the constables they could collect, no smaller array being deemed adequate to the peril of summoning one of the strong-holds of Popery. These being procured, the whole pro-

cession set off in marching order for Hales Court, upon the road to which place we must for the present leave them, that we may return to Father Bartholomew, whom we left proceeding to the residence of Sir Halsewell Tynte with the letter entrusted to him by Forester.

Unsuspicious of evil, and anxious to comply with the earnest solicitations of the invalid, he had undertaken this commission without much consideration; but as he slowly won his way toward Goathurst, the natural cautiousness and mistrust of old age beginning to assail him, he sat down beneath a tree to commune with himself as to the prudence of proceeding. In the first place, he bethought him that he had not consulted his kinsman upon the step, an omission which appeared the more grave and important the more he weighed it; and secondly, even if he could place implicit confidence in Forester's honour and honesty, he was by no means sure that his state of mind, disordered as it had lately been, qualified him to act in any measure that compromised the safety of the whole family.

If the letter were so harmless as he averred, why had he not previously shown it, either to its present bearer, or to Mr. Shelton? The good Father's inability to furnish any satisfactory answer to this question seemed to sanction suspicions in which he had not hitherto ventured to indulge. "This Stanley Forester," he whispered to himself, "is young, ardent, and his attachment to life may have overpowered his morality, or even his faculties, weakened as they have recently been. Under exactly similar circumstances, Nelthorpe, the ungrateful Nelthorpe, informed against Mrs. Gaunt, who had concealed him, and received a pardon for his treachery, while the unfortunate lady was burned alive for her charity. Our generous inmate cannot surely be a Nelthorpe; and yet human nature is always the same, it cannot always triumph over the temptations that may assail it. For myself, I am old, I am old, *cursum ferè consummavi*, and it can therefore little matter whether I carry the treacherous letters of Bellerophon, or the counterpart of that fatal missive which Uriah

bore to Joab ; but have I any right to imperil the lives of my generous kinsman, of the so rightly named Agatha, or of the delicate maiden, her friend, that is within our gates? Assuredly not ; and I must be satisfied as to this billet before I venture to deliver it."

He took it from his pocket, and having turned it round and round, as if by gazing upon it he could penetrate its contents, shortly resumed his soliloquy. "Either way there is danger ; for if I take it back to Hales Court, the delay may defeat the purpose for which it was written, since Forester declared with great solemnity that instant dispatch was indispensable—that it might be the means of saving all our family. Thus am I placed between the two horns of a dilemma, upon either of which life and death may depend, and from which nothing can extricate me but my opening the letter, a proceeding repugnant to my notions of honour, as it would be, I am well persuaded, to those of my kinsman, his daughter, and her friend. Although self-preservation be called the first law of nature,

it has less influence with me than the preservation of my friends, an imperative consideration, that is paramount over all others. Theirs then, be the safety, if it is to be secured by my thus breaking the seal ; mine alone be the disgrace, if it appear that I was unwarranted in doing so."

With a reluctant trembling hand, for he could not help revolting from an act that wore even the semblance of dishonour, he at length tore open the paper, and cast his eye hastily over the writing. To his utter amazement he found that it was dated from Hales Court, and bore the signature of his kinsman, Dominick Shelton.

Purporting to have been written by that gentleman, it detailed the finding of a disabled stranger in Goathurst-wood, to whom, as a Christian and fellow-creature, he had thought it his duty to render such assistance as common humanity dictated, until, in the delirium of fever, he had called himself Stanley Forester, whose name was in a proclamation, when, as several circumstances seemed to confirm this fact, the writer felt it incumbent upon him, as a loyal subject,

to surrender him up to the Government for examination. This, it was added, would have been done in the first instance, but that the discovery had only recently been made; and the letter concluded by requesting that Sir Halswell Tynte, as the nearest magistrate, would immediately issue a warrant, and send proper people to apprehend the suspected individual, and convey him to Bridgwater prison.

“Generous, magnanimous, but rash and desperate man!” exclaimed the father, as he finished the perusal of this singular forgery. “It is thus that you would sacrifice yourself to preserve us, and I can now understand your expression that the note you had written might prove of vital importance to the common safety of the Sheltons. But this must not—shall not be! Our name was never coupled with any act of cruelty and perfidy,—and it shall not be thus sullied by me. Surely, surely it was a heavenly prompting that urged me to break this seal, and much do I rejoice that I had the courage to conquer my repugnance, and to do so. No,

my son, thou shalt not be turned out like the scape-goat of the Israelites, to be made answerable for our sins, but we will love thee the more tenderly for thy generous devotedness, even as Abraham became more dearly attached to Isaac, after he had offered himself for the sacrifice, and carried the wood for his own holocaust. I will return to Hales Court with such speed as my aged limbs will allow, for my kinsman must be apprised of this discovery, and we must guard against any similar act of romantic desperation on the part of our guest."

On his reaching the house, Mr. Shelton was summoned from Forester's apartment, where he had resumed his station, and Agatha and Edith being also present, the father recapitulated the reasons which had decided him, after many scruples, to open the letter, an act which he admitted to be only justifiable by the circumstances, and the contents of the epistle itself, which he then read to the assemblage. If the sympathies of his auditors had been previously excited to no mean degree in favour of their

unfortunate inmate ; if they had admired his courage and devoted patriotism ; if their bosoms, particularly those of the females, had thrilled at the contemplation of his youth, beauty, accomplishments, and marvellous adventures ; if all had deeply commiserated his alarming illness, and taken a profound interest in the final safety of that life which they had been instrumental in preserving, it may be imagined to what a height their enthusiasm was exalted at thus learning that he had meditated what might be almost termed a suicide, for the purpose of screening them from the perilous responsibility they had incurred. Every heart throbbed with pity and admiration ; a tear was in every eye ; every tongue except Edith's, whose emotions were too profound and overpowering for speech, ejaculated praises of his generous self-abandonment ; Mr. Shelton thanked his kinsman with a fervent delight for having preserved their name from a stigma of infamy which, however unmerited, all their asseverations might have been inefficient to expunge. All were now more than ever re-

solved to save the magnanimous youth, be their own danger what it might ; but as they felt that some management might be required to conquer his scruples, and prevail upon him to be instrumental to his own preservation, they consulted together as to the most advisable mode of proceeding. Father Bartholomew suggested that they should leave him under the impression that the letter had been delivered, and themselves thereby exonerated from all risk, when he would have no pretext for not withdrawing himself from the house, and making his escape at the appointed hour of the coming night.

The crisis of his fate occurred, however, sooner than they had anticipated ; sooner, indeed, than even the Mayor of Bridgwater, the magistrates, and the constabulary *posse* had calculated, since their intended victim was disposed of before they could reach Hales Court. The military commander of the district having ridden over to visit Sir Frances Warre, learnt the duty upon which he was employed from one of his family, who stated that the mysterious

stranger would probably turn out to be an emissary of the Prince of Orange, and might prove a valuable prize to the captors. At this juncture the fears of the Court made them prompt and profuse in rewarding those who testified any zeal in their service, and the officer in question, not only disliking that the civil authorities should exhibit a vigilance superior to his own, but hoping to anticipate them in the capture, and supplant them in the expected reward, clapped spurs to his horse, intending to gallop over to the barracks, and instantly dispatch a few troopers to Hales Court. He had many miles to ride for this purpose, and was beginning to doubt his ability to outstrip his civil competitors, when he met upon the road a captain with a few mounted dragoons, preceding, although at some distance, a detachment which had been sent to reinforce the troops in the West. To this officer, who knew him, he gave orders that he should strike rapidly across the country with his dragoons to Hales Court, that he should place every inmate of the house under

arrest, and refuse to surrender them, particularly the suspected individual, to any authority until he himself should appear, with some of his own troopers, to claim his prisoner ; an arrangement by which he meant to secure to himself all the present *eclat* of the capture, and all the remuneration that might follow it.

These orders were promptly obeyed, and the Shelton family, sitting in consultation as we have already described, were appalled by the hasty irruption of a servant to announce that there was a party of dragoons at the gate, demanding instant admission in the name of the King, and the military commander of the district. Quickly, instantaneously did they surmise the object of this astounding visit, and their looks attested the sudden consternation of their hearts, though none of them were deprived of their self-possession. Edith, indeed, gasped for breath, pressed both hands upon her throbbing bosom, and murmuring, " Save him ! save him !" seemed for a short period to be stunned and bewildered by the danger.

“There must be no delay in admitting the soldiers,” said Mr. Shelton, “for that might excite suspicion. Run, Agatha, my child, run to the stranger’s apartment and bid him escape instantly by the secret passage, while I give admittance to the troops. All may yet be well; if not, we have done our duty, and whatever be our doom, we shall stand acquitted in the sight of Heaven.”

“We may confess that we have had a stranger within our gates,” cried Father Bartholomew, “but we may now truly declare that he has left the house. Be this our cue—Remember!”

Mr. Shelton hurried from the room;—Agatha, in obedience to his orders, had hastened to Forrester’s apartment, when Edith, as if suddenly recollecting herself, rushed after her with such speed that she overtook her at the door, and both burst into the chamber at once, ejaculating, “Fly, Sir, fly! save yourself for Heaven’s sake! to the secret passage—quick! quick! the house is beset with soldiers coming

to arrest you, and you are a lost man if you delay !”

“ My good, my inestimable friends !” said Forester, with the calmness acquired from frequent experience of equally critical emergencies,—“ I thank you from my heart for your vigilance and care, but it is not my own safety about which I am solicitous, but yours, which can only be secured by my apprehension. I was quite prepared for this visit. Sir Halsewell Tynte has indeed been quick, and I should have deemed the civil power might have sufficed, without calling in the aid of the military ; but I repeat that I am ready, nay, resolved to surrender, without even attempting my escape. Be not thus agitated, I implore you. From the arrangements I have made I can pledge myself most solemnly that neither you nor any of this generous household can be implicated in my fate.”

“ Gracious Heaven !” ejaculated Edith, “ do you imagine that we were thinking of ourselves ? You are mistaken—fly quickly—the letter—

the letter !” She gasped for breath, struggling with an hysterical affection of the throat that almost choked her.

“Escape ! escape instantly, I conjure you !” exclaimed Agatha, feeling perhaps as exquisitely as her friend, and yet better able to command her emotions ; “a moment’s delay may ruin yourself and us—your letter has never been delivered !”

“What ! how ! the letter to Sir Halsewell Tynte ?”

“It has never been delivered. Father Bartholomew brought it back.”

“Are you not, with a mistaken generosity, misleading me, in order to compel me to escape ? Oh, Miss Shelton ! much, every thing, the lives of us all may depend on my knowing the exact truth. Tell me, then, I implore you, by our common safety, has not Sir Halsewell received my communication, for if not—”

The door opened ; Agatha and Edith stood aghast and transfixed, expecting the irruption of the soldiers ; but it was Father Bartholomew,

who entered, still holding the letter. Quick as lightning Edith snatched it from him, and held it up before Forester's face, her hand and whole frame trembling in an ecstasy of agitation, her eyes staring wildly, and an inarticulate gurgling sound proceeding from her lips as she vainly attempted to speak.

“Alas ! I can doubt no longer—it is all too true !” exclaimed Forester ; “ Oh, reverend Sir ! why have you thus deceived me ? How can I ever forgive you this act of cruel kindness ? I must fly—I must fly—I must save myself to save you.” Taking the hand of Agatha and of Edith, and pressing them successively to his lips, he continued with a passionate earnestness ; “ Best — noblest — most generous, most heroic of women ! farewell—farewell for ever, and may every blessing—”

As he spoke, the females were urging him almost distractedly towards the closet, as if to expedite his escape, when the door of the apartment was again thrown open ; Edith looked sud-

denly round, and seeing Mr. Shelton approaching, accompanied by a dragoon officer, she uttered a shuddering cry, and tottered towards a chair into which she sank.

“He is lost ! he is lost !” shrieked Agatha, clasping her hands together with a look of unutterable dismay.

“The Lord’s will be done ! Amen ! Amen !” said Father Bartholomew, in a deep solemn voice.

Forester, unmoved by his own peril, but deeply affected at that of his friends, shook his head at the priest with a look of sorrow rather than of anger, and whispered to him to preserve the letter, since it might still become the means of their preservation ; after which he folded his arms, as if resolvedly awaiting his doom. The officer had now entered the apartment, when as Edith, aroused by the rattling of his sabre, stole at first a trembling glance at him, her distending eyes became transfixed, her features were convulsed, she started from her

chair, and threw herself into his arms with a loud cry, exclaiming—"My brother! my dear, dear Walter! Oh save him! save him!"

Her brother, for it was indeed no other than Walter Colyton, instead of assisting to raise her from the ground, upon which she had sunk, stared at Forester with amazement, as if hardly able to credit the evidence of his senses.

"Heavenly powers!" he at length ejaculated—"is it you—Mr. Baldwyn—my brave preserver? You do not recollect me? Have you forgotten that you saved my life when I was at the mercy of the ruffians who attacked me in Ormonde Fields?"

"I did not recognize you in your uniform," said Forester:—"Do your duty, Captain Colyton; to hesitate in the present instance would place your life once more in peril. I surrender myself your prisoner."

"He is lost—Edith is lost, we are all lost, if you arrest him," cried Agatha.

"What! shall I bring destruction upon my gallant preserver?" exclaimed Walter indig-

nantly—"Never, never! not if my life were ten times forfeit."

Mr. Shelton, who had hitherto been a silent spectator of the scene, now coming forward, desired his daughter to take charge of the still insensible Edith, and then in a few hurried sentences, but without mentioning Forester's name, explained the imminent and deadly jeopardy in which they were all placed, and disclosed the secret passage in the closet. "If you suffer this gentleman to escape," he said to Walter, "we may avoid all danger, for nothing but his arrest can establish his identity, and our consciousness of that identity will still remain to be proved before we can be seriously implicated. But you must not forget, Captain Colyton, the responsibility you will yourself incur if you connive in the escape of your prisoner."

"Who but yourselves can know that he ever *was* my prisoner?—we will all declare that he has left the house—that he is not to be found. Fly, Sir, fly! you have not a moment to lose; my dragoons, whom I have set to search in all

directions, will be here presently. Away, away! and God give you a safe deliverance."

"I will no longer hesitate," said Forester, "since by saving myself I can save such generous friends. Adieu! adieu! a thousand blessings on you all!"

He entered the closet, passed into the secret passage, shut the spring door behind him, and Walter had no sooner ascertained that he was safely ensconced, than he hastened to meet his men, expressing his regret that the person they came to arrest had left the house and made his escape, but ordering them not to relax in their search, as, notwithstanding all the assurances of the family, he might still be lurking somewhere about the premises. Fatigued with their morning's march, and annoyed at having been ordered across the country when they had nearly reached their quarters, the dragoons were much better disposed to accept Mr. Shelton's invitation to partake of some refreshment in the servants' hall, than to waste farther time and trouble in a search that promised after all to

be fruitless. Contenting themselves, therefore, with a hasty examination of the apartments they had not previously visited, they hastened to their repast, which they assaulted with an alacrity and satisfaction that soon made them forget the fatigues and vexations of the morning.

Never had the tranquil sequestered abode of Hales Court been so beleaguered with visitants as on the present eventful day. Not long had the dragoons been thus enjoying their good cheer, when the Mayor of Bridgwater, the two titled magistrates, Lawyer Watchet, and a whole *posse* of constables presented themselves at the gates, all equally mortified and surprised at finding the house in possession of soldiers, and learning that the bird had flown. The heated Mayor fretted and fumed, especially when he observed that his gold laced waistcoat was grievously soiled with spots that had distilled from his powdered and pomatumed wig ; the lawyer was vexed at being outwitted by the suspected delinquent, anticipated by the military,

and disappointed of a good job ; while the constables grumbled and growled that there was not a mouthful to refresh them after their long march, the soldiers having demolished all the viands in the house, or at least got possession of them, which was a tantamount phrase. One solitary sorry satisfaction remained to the malcontents, if it be any alleviation to have participants in our misfortunes, for the commander of the district soon came thundering up to the gates with a small party of troopers, whose smoking horses attested the rapidity of their march. They came but to share without diminishing the general disappointment, nor did their fresh and more strict search of the premises disclose any thing to reward their trouble, or appease their irritation. All agreed that a hue and cry ought to be raised after the fugitive, who must still be lurking in the neighbourhood, but all were too weary, too sullen, or too indifferent, to undertake farther proceedings at the present moment. The conduct of the Sheltons was unanimously pronounced highly cen-

surable, and such as ought to subject them to close and severe scrutiny, an opinion which might probably have occasioned them to be placed under immediate arrest, but that their arraigners began to fall out among themselves, the civil and the military authorities mutually accusing each other of underhand proceedings, and of usurping a power that did not belong to them. So much bitterness was engendered by this altercation, that they thought more of annoying one another, than of pursuing the fugitive, or inditing his harbourers, so that after an interchange of much taunting and insulting language, they departed to their respective quarters, leaving Hales Court, after all this unprecedented agitation, bustle and turmoil, to its customary silence and serenity.

CHAPTER X.

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever.

LEAR.

IT will be recollected that the Countess of Dorchester, on parting from Walter Colyton, had exacted from him, in return for the important revelations she had made, a pledge of honour that he would not seek any angry interview with Lord Sunderland or his myrmidon, the treacherous Seagrave; but consider his hands and his resentment to be both tied up for fourteen days, if she did not sooner release him from his obligation. That kind-hearted

woman, who had a real regard for Walter, and saw that he possessed his full share of youth's cholerick rashness, had good and cogent reasons for imposing this restraint upon the first ebullitions of his wrath. Were he to provoke Sunderland by upbraiding him with his baseness, and demanding satisfaction for the insult he had received, she feared that the minister, never very scrupulous, especially where his personal safety was concerned, would either procure his incarceration upon some frivolous pretext, which he had full power to accomplish, or perhaps have recourse to more desperate expedients for getting rid of him. Such was her opinion of the peer's cowardice and treachery, that she thought the latter alternative the most likely to be adopted; nor were these misgivings unsupported by vague rumours of similar acts that had been recently perpetrated, through the instrumentality of the ruffians whom he kept in pay.

Still less could any thing be obtained by calling Scgrave to account, a man, as she had

truly stated, almost as much beneath Walter's notice as his employer was above his reach. Even in a victory over a person of this stamp, who was pretty well known to be a creature of Lord Sunderland's, but little honour could be achieved; while there was no small danger in any rencontre with him, for the Captain had proved his strength and prowess, as well as his gladiatorial skill, in various scuffles and engagements with adversaries of all sorts.

Seeing Walter environed with these perils, and fearing that, although she might restrain him for a time, his impetuous indignation would ultimately prompt him to beard the powerful Sunderland, perhaps even in the palace of the sovereign, and thus entail some irremediable calamity upon his own head, it appeared to the Countess that the only way to extricate him from his difficulties, was to effect his immediate removal from London. She knew troops were about to be dispatched with all haste into the west of England, and by whispering into the King's ear the necessity of sending the steadiest and

most approved of his soldiers into a province that had so recently shown its disaffection, she procured a detachment of Lord Dover's regiment of Dragoons, including Walter's company, to be substituted for some other that had been previously destined to this service. "My fiery young spark," thought the Countess to herself, "will thus be quickly placed beyond the reach of danger and ruin; in a month his resentment will have time to cool and be forgotten; and, if not, I trust that the traitor Sunderland will by that day be so exposed and disgraced as to deserve contemptuous pity, rather than excite any desire for his farther chastisement. As to his mustachoed myrmidon the Captain,—*mi perdoni*, he is now a Major,—he must follow his master whichever way he travels, and that can be in no direction except downwards, if either of them means to give the Devil his due."

Delighted at the success of the manœuvre by which she had thus compelled Walter to steer clear of the mischiefs upon which he would have

rushed, and elated by a present of costly diamond bracelets which the King had just presented to her, a token the more gratifying since he had recently become exceedingly economical of his favours, the Countess clasped them upon her wrists with eyes that sparkled still more brightly than the jewels, dressed herself in a style of correspondent magnificence, and ordered her chair to be in readiness, intending to enjoy the effects of her splendour by visiting some of the female courtiers who she knew would envy her magnificence, affect to condemn the sacrifice of honour by which it was obtained, and yet be glad to rival her, if they could, in the King's affections. She possessed too much penetration, and too good a heart, not to see, and even to condemn this petty triumph as unworthy of a mind like hers; and yet she could not resist its indulgence, when she reflected that this was one of the very few pleasures now left to her. "If to be a monarch's mistress be dishonourable," she whispered to herself, "let me at least enjoy my disrepute; if I am ignoble, I am at all events

not unnohle ; I am a Countess, ay, and a splendidly endowed one ; and it is some consolation that I can excite jealousy and envy in a thousand hearts, though I may not win real respect from one." She surveyed herself in the tall mirrors, as if the reflection of her richly decorated figure could confirm the miserable solace she had endeavoured to extract from her splendour ; and she must have been more or less than woman, had she not been indeed gratified at observing how well she looked, and how becomingly as well as richly she was attired.

" Morlay, *mia cara* !" she exclaimed, as that parasite entered the room, " how like you this spagnolet and fringe ? methinks they will sweep the Mall becomingly. Fancy you this *mouche* upon my cheek ? it draws attention to the dimple ;—and this French hood, *rayonné* like the sun,—and these rich point cornets—and my necklaces—and this aigrette, and my pomander ball with its fillagree *pennache* ?—tell me, *mia favorita*, how do I look this morning ?"

" Like yourself, like what you are, ought to

be, and will be," replied the sycophant, "if a certain pale-faced chit, who is now gone to the Wells of Tunbridge, should never return, which an eminent physician thinks likely."

"Is this the posy of a ring, or Frank Gwyn's last new riddle? That I am like myself I can understand, though it is no great compliment; but as I never had patience to be an Œdipus, prythee solve me what is that which I am, ought to be, and shall be, in a certain presupposed event."

"A queen! what else will answer the enigma? And as to the contingency required, have you seen Partridge's "*Ephemeris*," where he confidently predicts that a female crowned head, or some other great person, will expire, at or about this time, a little sooner, or a little later?"

"*Robaccia!* ridiculous! how can you attend to that mountebank astrologer and his accommodating prophecies, made like a loose mantle, to cover every body and fit nobody? Since the future is his own freehold, why does not the starving rogue mortgage it, that he may fill his

stomach, buy himself clean linen, and dispose of principalities in an unpatched coat? Your prospective clauses deserve not an answer; but, how establish you your present tense that I *am* a queen?"

"What constitutes that distinction, unless it be to possess the affections of a king, and exercise the influence of a monarch's consort? As to the other qualities, such as beauty, talents, and a truly royal dignity both of character and demeanour, I say nothing, for I abhor adulation. I do not desire to be your encomiast, but your friend; one who will tell you of your faults when nobody else will, and who thinks it an honour, rather than a reproach, to be called the blunt Morlay, that would not flatter Jove for his power to thunder."

"I should like to see that ridiculous book of Partridge's, *cara mia*, if it be only to laugh at it. A female crowned head!—are those his words?—and about this time? He could not have known the queen's illness when his book was published. Lay it on my toilet in the

course of the morning—I may look into it, *mia semplicella*, when I want other nonsense than your own to amuse me, so prythee forget it not, as it may save you the invention of a second rebus.—A truce to this bantering. What shall I do, Morlay? I was thinking of sending my empty chair with footmen and flambeaux to leave some scores of cards at the houses of the friends who hate me most—for to them one *must* be polite—when suddenly a *capriccio* came into my head that I would go myself, and mortify them with my personal civilities, a resolution which I think I shall carry into effect, since you have made the sapient discovery that I look so like a queen. *Grazie a Dio!* I do not feel like one, for I am in good health, good spirits, and not particularly deficient, I hope, in good sense.”

“Ay, and not mean and stingy, and not given to moping in corners with the Jesuits, and not capable of having a supposititious child brought into your bed-room in a warming-pan,” said Morlay, who saw that the latter part of the

Countess's speech pointed at the reigning queen, and sought to curry favour by retailing the stupid and ridiculous scandal of the day. "Oh! I would have you go yourself by all means, for I never saw you look so well, and they will all be dying with envy of your magnificent bracelets. Don't forget to call on —— Hark! a loud knock! Shall I say your Ladyship is not at home? I heard no carriage drive up, and I see no chair except your own."

"Oh, no! let the visitant come up by all means. You know I never suffer myself to be incommoded, but dismiss my dear friends *sans ceremonie*, the moment they become tiresome. Heaven knows how I have kept you so long about me in spite of your fulfilling this predicament!"

"Because you must have one honest disinterested adviser," said Morlay, too much accustomed to this coarse raillery, and too mindful of her own interest to take offence at it.

"Now, if this should be my little Lord Godolphin," resumed the Countess, "with his

lank figure, black stern countenance, and solemn awful deportment; he who says he loves gaming because it requires no talking, and when he does speak distils you a few slow words of nonsense, just as an alembic gives you drop by drop an extract of the simples in it; or if instead of a great but little, it should be a little but really great man, my friend Sir Christopher Wren, for instance, who promised to call and show me the model of the theatre at Oxford;—or my witty physician Dr. Radcliffe, who says he will take care to keep me alive, not only to spite the Queen, but that the King may have the credit of loving at least one good Protestant;—or if, perchance—”

Her conjectures were here cut short, for the door was thrown open, and the Groom of the Chambers announced Sir Charles Sedley, to the utter amazement of the Countess, who had never received a visit from him since she had obtained her title, and occupied her present mansion. “Sir Charles Sedley! my Father!” she exclaimed, as the colour rushed over her face—“Morlay, you may withdraw!”

This order was immediately obeyed; the door was closed; Sir Charles, bowing with the consummate courtesy that never deserted him, drew a chair, adjusted his cravat, and there was an embarrassed silence of a few seconds, which the lady was the first to break by resuming—"This is an unexpected honour, but indeed, indeed Sir, I am most happy to see you."

"I wish I could truly say as much!" replied Sir Charles. "As my daughter,—as Catherine Sedley, I shall ever be glad to see you; but as the Countess of Dorchester, as the King's mistress, tricked out in these meretricious ornaments, and inhabiting this gorgeous mansion, I can have little pleasure and less honour in beholding you."

"And is it for the purpose of this flattering communication that I have been favoured with a visit?" inquired the Countess, nettled at the epithet he had applied to her jewels.

"No, Madam; my opinion of your past conduct, my sense of your present degradation, are too well known to need repetition; the stain

you have brought upon the name of Sedley cannot be altogether expunged, but the tears of repentance may wash out the blackness of its dye, and leave it of a fainter hue. If you cannot retrace your steps, you may at least halt in your disgraceful career; if you cannot affirm that you never strayed from the paths of virtue, you may claim the merit of not persevering to the last in the ways of vice."

"Perfectly true, Sir, though not quite original; for, if I mistake not, I remember to have read as much in my horn-book. Nor may my career be altogether an useless, though you are pleased to designate it as a disgraceful one, since I flatter myself that I am actuated by motives which, if they cannot redeem, may in some degree extenuate it. My influence with the King has never been unworthily exerted, and in my anxiety to save him from error, I have often hazarded the loss of his favour. Despising as much as you do the pernicious monks who hoodwink and misguide him, I have importunately admonished him against

their machinations, often and earnestly warning him that his blind tyrannical zeal for Popery is more likely to make his subjects rebels than converts. If to have discharged this public duty openly, fearlessly, and incessantly, be any atonement for my private misconduct, it is an expiatory merit that I may honestly claim; nor can the failure of my counsels detract from the courage and sincerity,—nay, I will say from the patriotism, that prompted them.”

“An Esther, yea, verily, a second Esther, who becomes a royal concubine that she may save the Protestants, as her predecessor delivered the Jews! Nay, Madam, if you wanted a heroine to imitate, I could have recommended to you a Christian prototype of our own days; I could have brought to your notice the example of Madame de la Valière, the late mistress of the French King, who renouncing her splendid infamy, retired into a Convent of Carmelites, assumed the name of the Sister Louisa of Mercy, wore hair cloth, walked bare foot,

and sung whole nights long in the choir, a life of austerity which she still continues to practise as some atonement for her past misconduct. Our habits and our religion alike reject this severity of discipline; but you might break off your disreputable commerce with the King; you might abandon this stately mansion that gives you shame rather than distinction; in the retirement of private life, or beneath your father's roof, whose house in that event would be gladly opened to you, you might by your future propriety and decorum recover some portion of the good opinion which you have forfeited; and though you can never make your odious title an honour, you might henceforth so conduct yourself as to be an honour to your title."

"When, like Madame de la Valière, I have lost the affections of my royal lover, I may perhaps follow her example, and boast that I have abandoned my sins because *they* have deserted *me*. It is an old stratagem, and may succeed when the devil can be cheated, but not before."

“ If you are not to be influenced by moral considerations, and a sense of your dishonour, you might at least evince some regard for your own interests. You cannot but be aware, for you were never deficient in penetration, that a crisis, a convulsion is approaching, in which it is by no means improbable that your royal lover, as you unblushingly call him, may lose the crown he has so unequivocally shown that he knows not how to wear. Your lease of his favour cannot be of long duration ; wait not to be repudiated, discarded, thrown aside as a plaything of which he is tired, or a part of his private establishment which he can no longer afford to maintain, but quit him while there is yet grace in doing so ; assume a virtue, if you have it not, and while none but the purest motives can be attributed to your conduct, it will at the same time be consistent with every consideration of policy and prudence.”

“ Never, Sir, never !” exclaimed the Countess indignantly.—“ What ! desert my benefactor at his approaching hour of need ! Re-

form and purify my past life by present ingratitude, treachery, and dissimulation! Become a hypocrite, and pretend compunctious visitings of conscience, because my career of error may soon cease to be a profitable one! Recover my fair fame and integrity, by adding to the number of my misdeeds! Your dirty shoes, Sir, may be cleaned by blacking; but your sullied daughter, if such she be, cannot be purified by soiling herself with this additional foulness."

"O Madam! I cry your mercy," said Sir Charles, in a taunting sarcastic tone—"I came not to bandy tropes and illustrations with the witty Catherine Sedley, but to reclaim, if possible, the licentious and impenitent Countess of Dorchester. I stand rebuked: I should not have taken such a liberty; for even if I forgot the reverence and submission due from a father to his child, I should have remembered my inferior rank—that I am but an honest Baronet in the presence of a dishonest Peeress. Those flaunting jewels, this sumptuous mansion, your train of gorgeous lackeys, all should have re-

mind me that I had the honour of being in the house of Dalilah, and of addressing a royal concubine, who must naturally consider it an insult, when I presume to recommend to her notice the sacred obligations of morality, religion, and filial obedience."

Sir Charles should have known his daughter better. Had he interested her feelings, or convinced her reason; had he appealed dispassionately to her head or heart, he might perhaps have gained his point; he would have been sure, at least, of a respectful hearing, and an affectionate desire to meet his wishes; for she was sincerely attached to her father, whose estrangement had occasioned her much secret unhappiness. But these scoffing reproaches, this galling irony, were only calculated to inflame a temper naturally petulant and haughty, and rendered still more ungovernable by the world's flattery and fortune's favour. She coloured suddenly and deeply, her eyes flashed, her bosom panted, and she forcibly bit her nether lip in the endeavour to suppress her

passion, that she might answer him in his own gibing tone. A second or two elapsed before she could trust her voice, and she could hardly maintain her accent of assumed calmness, as she exclaimed—"Morality and Religion! I have heard that when debauchees, becoming too old for farther sin, offer up to Heaven the Devil's leavings, they are apt to inculcate the most strenuously those virtues in which themselves have been most deficient. A blind man may hold a lantern, and enable others to find the way, though he cannot see it himself; a preacher, like a finger-post, may point out the right path, although his own steps do not pursue it; but what shall be said of him who both directs and leads his flock astray, and then upbraids them with the error of their ways? Morality and Religion! O monstrous! that the daughter of Sir Charles Sedley should be wanting in those virtues, when they have been so carefully instilled into her both by precept and example! How unpardonable to forget the chaste maxims of his plays and poems! What abomination

not to recollect the holy life of the professed libertine and man of gallantry, who wasted his estate in such laudable profligacy as might best please his decorous friends, Lords Rochester and Buckhurst, Killigrew and Etherege, and who, in pursuit of this worthy object, was indicted for a riot, and fined 500*l.* for an insult against public decency !”

“ Enough, Madam, enough,” said Sir Charles, starting up in an agitation of anger and remorse ; “ for both our sakes, I will spare you any more of an exposure, which none but a Tullia would have presumed to make. I confess that you have succeeded in lacerating my feelings, and I leave you that consolation, in addition to all the infamy of your greatness. But listen, Madam, listen ; you have yourself a daughter, and even in that you possess an honour which I cannot boast, for mine is not illegitimate. That daughter may occasion you to feel as I do now, ‘ how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.’ But there will be a still bitterer pang in reserve

for you, as there has been for me, when, although you may be wrung by the heartlessness of the charge, you cannot deny its truth, should that daughter ever upbraid you to your face with the disgraceful licentiousness of your younger days, and attempt to excuse her own abandoned life by pleading the example of her parent!" So saying, Sir Charles bowed with his unalterable grace and courtesy, and quitted the apartment.

Stung by the sarcastic reproaches of her father, and wound up to a paroxysm of ungovernable passion, the Countess had been hurried into recriminations, which, however they might be just, were scarcely justifiable as coming from a daughter. Her triumph, like every other victory of angry and improper excitement, entailed its own instant punishment; her better feelings quickly regained their ascendancy; a pang of remorse shot to her heart, and as soon as she recovered from the momentary stupor in which she had been plunged, she clasped her hands together, looked wildly

around her, and ejaculated in a voice, rendered hoarse by her emotions — “ Sir Charles ! Sir Charles Sedley ! Oh, stop him ! stop him ! Impious, unnatural wretch that I am, he is my father ! Oh, return, return my dear father, to your penitent daughter, who thus, thus humbly implores and supplicates forgiveness ! ”

As she sank down upon the carpet it was an affecting spectacle to behold the Countess arrayed in all her gorgeousness, kneeling in the midst of her own splendid saloon, clasping her jewelled hands together, and with humiliated and contrite looks fixing her distended eyes upon the door, as if she expected that her father might return to bestow the pardon for which she so submissively sued. In this suppliant attitude she had hardly remained a minute before she heard the hall-door shut, when starting upon her feet, she ejaculated, “ It is too late—he is gone—he is gone ! ” and flying to her own room, she threw herself upon the bed in an uncontrollable outbursting of passionate tears and sobs.

Walter Colyton in the mean while remained in the camp at Hounslow, boiling with undiminished indignation against Lord Sunderland and his unprincipled agent, and longing impatiently for the expiration of the fortnight during which he was prohibited from seeking redress. Although his actions were restricted for that period, his mind was free, and he employed it almost incessantly in concerting measures for calling the delinquents to account. With this view he made immediate inquiries respecting Seagrave, and was inexpressibly mortified at learning, that having been promoted to a majority, he had set off to join his regiment in a remote part of England the very day after the Court at Whitehall. A time may come, nevertheless, thought Walter to himself, when I may measure swords with this nefarious varlet, and at all events his unprincipled master, who cannot decamp from London, shall do me justice, for himself, for the ruffian Seagrave, and for the virtuous Mrs. Audley. This anticipation being his only solace, it may be judged with what

deep and angry disappointment he was embittered when informed, two days before the expiration of his fortnight, that he must prepare himself to march on the following morning to the West of England. Flying to the Colonel of his regiment, he declared that the most indispensable business required his presence in London, and implored leave of absence for only three or four days, pledging himself to rejoin his detachment with the utmost dispatch. "It is utterly impossible to grant your request," said the officer; "and in the present critical situation of the country, I am somewhat surprised at your preferring it. My orders are peremptory upon this subject, and if you do not march with your company to-morrow morning, it will be my painful duty to report your absence to the War Office."

Intolerably vexed at the failure of his application, and conscious that the smallest disobedience of orders might occasion his ignominious dismissal from the army, he had no alternative but to make instant preparations for his depar-

ture, in the bustle of which, continued till night-time, he forgot, in some degree, the disappointments of the day, and soon after sunrise of the following morning was on his march to the West of England. So far, however, from participating in the gaiety of his brother officers, who in the natural restlessness engendered by the inoccupation of a soldier's life in time of peace, had grown weary of the camp, and delighted in the excitement of a change, Walter's reflections were of the most melancholy and disheartening nature. All the fair prospects of fortune and advancement, which but a few days before had inflated him with hope and exultation, were now dissipated as suddenly as they had been raised. He had been ostensibly patronised by the Prime Minister, merely for the purpose of being made a gull and a dupe, and entrapped into an alliance with his cast-off mistress; the favour he had found with the Countess of Dorchester had tended, indeed, to preserve him from falling into the snare, but did not seem likely, now that they were separated for

an indefinite period, to benefit him in any more essential manner ; and the gracious reception he had experienced from the King would stand him in little stead when opposed to the hostility of the all-powerful Sunderland, on which he might now confidently reckon, and which was likely to operate as a perpetual bar to his promotion in the army. Even the prospect of again seeing his beloved Hetty and his family, which at any other time would have been a panacea for all his disappointments, afforded him now but a doubtful gratification, since he must appear before them under circumstances which he felt to be humiliating, when contrasted with the lofty anticipations his letters had led them to indulge.

The sanguine, when once depressed, are more desponding than others, and Walter remained during the first portion of his march a prey to dejection and all sorts of sinister forebodings. But while the mind retains its youthful elasticity, these moods are seldom of long continuance, and hope, submerged, not drowned, soon became once more buoyant in his heart.

In spite of Sunderland's enmity, he again drew auspicious auguries from the flattering reception he had experienced at the Court, although the day of their realization might not be an early one. There is nothing so intoxicating as a monarch's condescension. Bees, when they have sipped the smallest portion of its sweets from the nectary of the hollyhock, fall inebriated and senseless at the foot of the flower ; and courtiers, who resemble those buzzing insects in this respect, are soon laid prostrate by a few sugared words from a royal mouth. Of a thousand men who would remain undaunted at the frowns or menaces of a king, not one perhaps can resist the fascination of his smiles, and upon this point Walter offered no exception to the ordinary weakness of humanity. Nor was there any thing credulous or overweening in his lending himself to these auspicious dreams of future favour, for the reigning monarch, unlike his false, heartless, and unprincipled brother, was chary of his word, and even of exciting an undue expectation, but strictly ob-

servant of promises once made, never capriciously withdrawing his favour, although he had never been known to restore it when once justly forfeited. To the Countess of Dorchester also Walter reverted with pleasant though vague anticipations, flattering himself that she took an interest in his welfare, which would not evaporate in the few and delightful interviews with which he had been honoured. In spite of her levity, her satirical vein, and her all assaulting *persiflage*, he believed her to be a sincere and kind-hearted woman ; and even that occasional dash of coarseness which he had remarked in her conversation, evincing as it did a disdain of all affectation and hypocrisy, carried to his mind an additional conviction of her honest trustiness.

As his spirits and confidence revived, his thoughts brooded with a more exclusive tenderness upon Hetty. On the journey to London, and during his abode there, new events and scenes had crowded so rapidly upon one another, and kept him in such a constant state of excitement, that although his mistress had never been

absent from his heart, the hurry and perturbation of his mind had not allowed him to dwell exclusively upon her image. In one sense, indeed, she was the prompter of all his actions ; for the ambition to which he surrendered himself was chiefly attractive in his eyes as it pointed to the consummation of all his wishes, by promising the advancement and independence that might enable him to marry her. These fond dreams of his heart and hope had been suddenly and rudely dissipated, and it would now become his duty to state that fact to Hetty, when he should again have the happiness of seeing her. Oh with what an accelerated and delicious pulsation did his heart throb at the prospect of that interview ! It seemed as if he were jealous of his own bosom that it had suffered itself to turn to other idols than the one sole object of its affection, even although he had only coveted the favours of Plutus that he might lay them on the shrine of Cupid. Perhaps love never burns with such an impatient ardour as when we are returning to the chosen one of our attachment, after a

separation that has been marked by stirring and engrossing pursuits; we feel so anxious to make atonement for the temporary alienation of our thoughts, that a meeting of lovers under such circumstances has all the tenderness of a reconciliation, without the reproach of a previous quarrel. With the happy alchemy of youth, which can extract sweet honey from bitter flowers; Walter contrived also to make even his disappointments furnish him a solace. While there was a prospect of bettering his fortune or obtaining promotion, there was a valid motive for deferring their union; but now that all immediate hope of that nature had vanished, why should they not snatch their happiness, even out of the lap of despair, decide upon a clandestine marriage, and trust to time and chance for a restoration to the favour of his parents. If Hetty could be brought to consent to this measure, which he saw no reason to doubt, he felt tolerably certain that his father, whose good temper, or rather whose happy indifference never allowed him to withstand importunity,

would speedily become reconciled. That he would part with the smallest portion of his income, or sacrifice the most trifling luxury to assist in their maintenance, he knew him too well to expect ; but he would hardly deny to Hetty, when she became the wife of his son, that protection which he now afforded to her as an alien ; his mother would gladly consent to any arrangement that secured to Edith the continued society of her friend ; and thus they might remain beneath the paternal roof until some happy chance, or the smiles of relenting Fortune enabled them to support an establishment of their own. Idle and foolish as was this mode of reasoning, and sharply as we all condemn it when we come to be parents, how many of us in our young loves have beheld, in similar arguments, a sound excuse for following the indiscreet impulses of our hearts !

Abandoning himself to such delightful reveries during the latter part of his march, and pressing forward with increased impatience as they approached the neighbourhood of Bridg-

water, Walter, accompanied at that moment by only a few dragoons, had encountered the commanding officer of the district, and had been ordered to Hales Court in the manner we have detailed. Of the Shelton family he knew very little, their familiarity with his own having chiefly sprung up during his absences; but he was aware that an acquaintance existed between the two; he had no ambition to discharge the functions of the police by apprehending offenders, if any such were lurking at Hales Court, and for the sake of its inmates, whose characters he had learned to respect, he resolved to execute his duty in the most delicate manner possible. He had taken care, therefore, so to approach the house, as to be recognized at some distance; he had tarried patiently at the gate till it was opened to him, and willingly yielded to the suggestion of Mr. Shelton, that the dragoons should search the lower part of the house, while he himself ascended with that gentleman to the upper apartments. His surprise at encountering Edith

had been mutual ; for in the suddenness and bustle of leaving London, he had not apprised his family of his movements, nor had he done so since, reflecting that he should reach them almost as soon as a letter, and intending to reserve for them the pleasure of an unexpected interview.

After quitting Hales Court, he proceeded with his few dragoons to Bridgwater, where the rest of his detachment had already arrived, and on the following day, the whole of the troops in that vicinity were ordered out for a field-day and inspection by the military commander of the district ; for which purpose, they were assembled on an open space to the west of the town. The soldiers were under arms, the general and several other officers were upon the ground, the evolutions of one of the divisions had just commenced, and Walter was in the act of giving directions to a subaltern, when a well-known voice reached his ear, and turning suddenly round, he beheld Seagrave laughing and talking to a brother officer in his usual loud

and vulgar tone. Utter amazement at such an unlooked-for rencontre almost deprived him for the moment of his faculties, and he gazed upon the vision, as if he could hardly trust his eyes ; while Major Seagrave, for such was the rank he now wore, advancing towards him with his usual unblushing effrontery, and his customary air of perfect familiarity, exclaimed — “ *Mort diable*, Mynheer Wouter ! is that you ? *Sacre, mon cher !* I thought you were doing duty in the gay camp at Hounslow Heath ; but as we have met upon your own native soil, I trust we shall soon crack a bottle of the Squire’s claret together at Orchard Place.”

Walter was naturally cholerick, and being driven to an ungovernable rage by the surprise of his feelings, and the unparalleled effrontery of this speech, he grasped the handle of his sword, while, from his trembling lips, burst the words — “ Scoundrel and liar ! hast thou the audacity to address me thus ? Never will I exchange words with thee, except at the point of my weapon, and if thou hast not the

cowardice, as well as the drunkenness of the bully, thou wilt retire with me at once, that I may chastise thee as thou deservest."

"*Bloet ende donder, mon cher!*" cried Seagrave, not in the least disconcerted at this public insult—"if you are for huffing and ruffling, for clashing swords instead of rattling glasses, it's all one to honest Bat. Seagrave; but at this moment I am upon duty, and too old a soldier to commit a breach of discipline, even for the pleasure of running a saucy young spit-fire through the midriff. Wait till we are dismissed, *mon ami*, and then, *zoo waar als ik leef*, as Hans Mundungus says, you shall have a taste of cold steel in whatever part of the body you may prefer."

"It is a challenge then," cried Walter fiercely, "and that it may be understood to be a mortal one, thus do I throw down the gauntlet,"—and with the back of his hand he struck Seagrave slightly across the face.

"What, Sir!" exclaimed the person by Seagrave's side, who was of high military rank—

“ have you dared to strike your superior officer upon duty, in the field, and in my presence? This is intolerable! I place you instantly under arrest! Major Seagrave, I command you to your post — leave this affair to me — such an outrageous violation of all discipline shall receive a signal and summary punishment.”

“ *Zwaarten en ponjaarten!*” cried Seagrave; “ it is quite unnecessary, for I would presently have cooled his courage, and brought him to his senses by a single taste of Bilboa, one simple touch of Andrea Ferrara. However, General, I know my duty and obey.” So saying, he saluted, and withdrew towards his post, previously exclaiming to Walter, as he replaced his disordered mustacho — “ Signor Gualtero, *au revoir!* you have presumed to derange my *moustache*, in return for which, I hope, ere long, to have the honour of letting a little daylight into your small ribs.”

The General now made a signal to a file of soldiers, and addressing himself, as they came

up, to the subaltern at their head, desired him to take Captain Colyton prisoner, to march him to the guard-house, and place a sentinel over him night and day until farther orders, a command which was instantly put in execution.

The still infuriated Walter, who knew that resistance would be madness, and expostulation vain, obeyed with a silent, sullen resignation ; in half an hour he was disarmed and immured in the guard-house, before the door of which a sentinel was mounted ; and as his wrath slowly subsided, he began to reflect seriously and sorrowfully upon the probable consequences of publicly striking his superior officer when upon duty.

CHAPTER XI.

If he have reached the noble worth of Captain, -
He may well claim a worthy gentlewoman,
Though she were yours, and noble.
I grant all that too, but this wretched fellow
Reaches no farther than the empty name
That serves to feed him.

A King and No King.

GREAT was the astonishment of the family at Orchard Place, when Edith's return from Hales Court apprised them of Walter's arrival in Somersetshire, and the probability of their shortly seeing him. "What, Walter! Captain Colyton, I mean, coming home!" exclaimed Hetty, colouring deeply in her sudden surprise and joy — "How extraordinary that he should quit the camp at Hounslow, when his

last letter announced——” she checked herself, blushed violently at the recollection that she was about to betray her clandestine correspondence, and endeavoured to hide her confusion by playing with Ponto the spaniel.

“Body o’ me !” exclaimed the Squire — “I recollect nothing in his last letter that should prevent his following orders, and marching with his troop whithersoever it may be commanded ; and by the flasks and flaggons ! I shall be right glad to have a peep at the boy, just to see how he looks in his dragoon uniform. Troth ! I was a pretty fellow myself at his age, and have had bright and leering eyes cast at me from many a balcony and window, as I marched through the country towns, though I had no better gear in those days than a buff jerkin with brass bosses, a plain iron cap on my head, and a rapier, with a chain rattling against my high boot-tops. But then, look you, I sat upon my horse like a centaur, with such a hollow and easy-playing back when he caracoled and curveted, that the donzellas used to point

me out to one another, and cry—'od's life, my dear, saw you ever such a pretty fellow, and such a graceful young cavalier?"

“Tush, Sir, tush!” cried his spouse, scandalized at these vainglorious boastings—“have you no shame that you thus recall the sinful pleasures of your reprobate and unregenerate days? Though you are still a wanderer from the saving doctrine, and the paths of righteous and holy living, methinks you might at least recollect that you are now an old man.”

“*Mort de ma vie*, Becky! say middle-aged, or elderly at the worst. I wish I could forget it, for though I can still sit a horse passing well, and carry myself somewhat like a soldier”—here he drew up his fine figure, and thrust out his chest—“yet do I feel that I am no longer what I was. Nay, look not so glum, mistress mine; thou knowest that I was once a comely spark, or else how camest thou, seeing that he was such a graceless caitiff, to bestow thy fair hand upon the gay, tippling, love-making, song-singing varlet, Jasper Colyton?”

Not being provided with a satisfactory answer to this question, the lady contented herself with a shake of the head and a sigh, which might rather be interpreted into an expression of regret at the step she had taken, than an explanation of her motives; when suddenly changing a subject that seemed to be an unpalatable one, she exclaimed,—

“ You only wish, then, to behold your son Walter that you may be reminded of yourself in your younger days, and admire his dragoon uniform. The boy will not resemble you in one respect, for I have not brought him up like a Moabite or a Canaanite, but have given him a good and godly education; and as for his regimentals, they may well be handsome, seeing what they have cost us, and that we have had to pay twice over for his outfit.”

“ Thanks to your usual good management, which sewed up his money in a saddle instead of entrusting it to his proper keeping, and which was much of a piece with the forethought that

locked up Orchard Place, and left it to be sacked by Lord Feversham's troopers."

Mrs. Colyton could seldom bear to be twitted with the loss of money, especially when it was occasioned by her own mismanagement, without losing her temper, and as she generally fell into one of her worst humours, when she found herself getting the worst of the discussion, she rebuked her husband in a strain proportionate to her conscious deficiency of better argument.

"'Od's heart, Becky !" cried the Squire, who though he did not love his wife, hated to have his equanimity disturbed, " I never meant to vex thee. There's my hand, and I ask thy pardon, so prythee let us be good friends, so far, at least, as to have no wrangling and jangling. 'Sdeath ! it would give me no displeasure on earth to measure swords once more with an armed Roundhead, but it irketh me to measure angry words with a Puritan spouse, especially when we should all be jovial and merry at the

thought of Walter's return. Though he owes his soldiership to me, he is no prodigal son, thanks to your pious tuition, and we have no fatted calf to kill, but if I draw not the corks, and spill not the blood of some of my tallest claret bottles on the day of his arrival at Orchard Place, then am I not his father, and no true toper. What ! saith not the old song

‘ The man that swills ale
Soon finds his words fail,
And sinks to a mood melancholic ;
While he that quaffs claret
Shall prate like a parrot,
And ever be fit for a frolic ! ’ ”

“ Ah Jaspar ! Jaspar ! you are still as young as ever in one respect ; glad of any excuse for a carouse, and loving the flesh-pots of Egypt more than the pleasant savour of the land of Promise. Will you never forsake these creature comforts, these devil's decoys, wherewith he catcheth sinners and topers by the palate, even as an angler catcheth a gudgeon ? Know you how much we pay a year to these Popish Philistines of France for their sin-begetting claret, not so good after

all as a draught of honest home-brewed ale or cider; and have you forgotten—Hetty, my dear, you may follow Edith to her room, and look that the blinds be down, lest the sun should fade the curtains—have you forgotten, I say, in your heathen eagerness for a drinking bout, that this early return of Walter is no subject for merriment, since it may revive his idle attachment to Hetty Chervil?”

“’Slife, Becky, I thought not of that! but I warrant there will be little now to fear, for the lad has been in London and in camp, and if he be his father’s son and a true soldier, he has had half a dozen mistresses by this time.”

“Heaven forbid that he should be such a vessel of abomination! When he hath once made a prudent and a proper choice, I trust he will ever be true to his vow.”

“Ay, and so do I: I would have him as true to the sex as the weathercock is to the wind, always owning its influence, and yet pointing twenty different ways in a month. What! I warrant the young rogue has already lounged

into chocolate houses, and sipped ratafia with the Signora of the bar; lolled upon the benches at the playhouse, and toyed with the orange girls; tiddled with his brother officers, and then danced with the *Buona Robas* of the camp; and do you expect to find him such a milksop as to retain his boyish love for Hetty? Body-o'-me! now that he has seen a little of life, he will know better than to marry a girl without either money or interest."

"Truly, Jaspar, I should be sorry that our son's principles were corrupted, and yet it would much delight me that he should forego all thought of this ridiculous attachment. It is an unfortunate affair altogether."

"So it is, Becky, and like other unfortunate affairs, one of your own contrivance, for I had nothing to do with bringing Hetty into the house."

"Nor with any other domestic concern; every thing is left to me, thanks to your irregularity and lazy self-indulgence; and whatever goes wrong, mine of course must be the blame."

“ Irregularity ! don’t I go as sure as ever the clock strikes twelve, to take my silver tankard of warm sherry, and my pipe, in the alcove under the crooked pear-tree ? Lazy self-indulgence ! don’t I attend to the horses, see the dogs regularly fed, and ride out to the moor almost every day of my life ? ”

“ I can answer for your feeding the dogs, and to my cost ; for when I wanted some dripping yesterday for frying, lo ! it was all gone to the kennel to mix with pollard for these expensive pointers and greyhounds. Heaven grant we be not all brought to want ! But to revert to Hetty,—do you not think that while Walter remains in our neighbourhood we had better send her—Jaspar ! Jaspar ! you are caressing Ponto instead of listening to me ! ”

“ Zooks, Becky ! and is not that better than caressing you and listening to Ponto ? ”

“ You are rude, Sir ; but it is my own fault, for expecting you would listen to reason, or take the smallest interest in the concerns of your family. Here comes my dear brother,

and I am glad of it, for I shall now be sure of an attentive auditor, and one who will give me good and friendly counsel."

While she was speaking, Paul Mapletoft entered the apartment, his spectacles upon his nose, a pen in his mouth, a prism in one hand, a sheet of paper in the other, and proceeding to the windows without paying the smallest attention to his sister's declaration that she wished to ask his advice in a matter of considerable importance, he very leisurely closed the shutters, involving the room in sudden darkness, with the exception of two rays that streamed through circular perforations in the wood. "Paul! Paul!" cried Mrs. Colyton, shaking him smartly by the arm when she found that her words won no attention from him, "what are you about?"

"Acting the part of an attentive auditor," said the Squire, with a hearty chuckle—"and enlightening you by leaving you in the dark."

"Goodnow, sister!" cried the scholar, starting from his fit of abstraction as if he had just

been awakened from sleep, “as I hope to be saved, I was not aware that you were in the chamber. The sun has left my room, and I therefore came hither that I might try Sir Isaac Newton’s last experiment on the refrangibility of light, and the prismatic colours. Of a surety you know that he hath recently made a brilliant discovery in chromatics, and you will therefore be deeply interested when ——”

“Tush, brother, Sir Isaac’s optics will not assist me in finding my way half so well as a few words of advice from yourself, so sit down and listen to me, and I will put back the shutters again that we may see what we are about. You have heard that Walter is again in our neighbourhood?”

“Is he so, truly? The dear boy! Off what part of the coast is his ship stationed?”

“Paul! Paul! how *can* you be so forgetful? He is not in the Navy but the Army, and a detachment of his regiment has been ordered into Somersetshire.”

“And we mean to celebrate his arrival at

Orchard Place by a jollification," cried the Squire: "will not that be classical and proper?"

"Truly, brother, I had rather it should be called a *convivium*, or a *symposium*, the former of which words is much used by Virgil for a merry-making, whereas the term *epula* is rather applicable to a formal banquet; and yet I remember me that in the third Eclogue of his *Bucolics* where Menelaus——"

"Paul! Paul! did I not tell you that I wanted to consult you on a matter of importance?"

"I protest, and so you did! it was touching the prismatic properties. Allow me again to close the shutters, and I will expound to you the Newtonian theory of light."

He was rising for this purpose, when Mrs. Colyton, again seizing his arm, confined him to his seat, and repeated that she wanted his friendly counsel in a matter closely affecting the welfare of the family.

"Goodnow, my dear sister!" cried the scholar, shaking his head as if to recollect him-

self and throw away the literary and scientific thoughts that might distract his attention,—
“ I implore your pardon,—speak on, speak on, and I will listen to you with a heedful ear.”

Thus encouraged, Mrs. Colyton began to unfold the subject of her anxieties, when the Squire, who liked not the preluding sigh, and the lacrymose strain of her exordium, and who took, moreover, very little interest in the discussion, started up, patted his spaniel on the head, and quitted the room, singing

“ Come Ponto, and Pincher, and Juno and Flincher !
Sing hey down derry, so blithe and so merry—
Holloo !”

which last word he gave with a strength of lungs that made the whole house ring like a bell, and on reaching the hall blew his silver whistle, a signal that was immediately answered by a whole gamut of canine sounds from the stable-yard and the kennel, to which quarters he straightway hastened.

In relating the object for which Walter had

been ordered to Hales Court, Edith had contented herself with stating that the troops had made no discovery, and of course avoided the smallest allusion to Stanley Forester, so that her parents knowing that in the jealousy of the Government, or the meddling zeal of the Magistrates, the houses even of the most loyal subjects were not always free from inquisitorial visits, entertained no suspicion how matters really stood, and soon abstained from all farther enquiries. Hetty Chervil, however, was by no means so easily satisfied. Drawing Edith to her own room, or to some sequestered part of the garden, she would persecute her with innumerable questions as to how Walter looked, what brought him into the West, where he was stationed, how long he might probably remain in the neighbourhood, when it was likely he would come over to Orchard Place, what enquiries he made respecting herself, and a hundred other of those minute points to which lovers attach importance, however immaterial they may seem to others. In vain did Edith protest that the hurried

nature of their interview, and the agitating character of the military duty he had to perform; precluded him from exchanging more than a few words with her, when she was so overcome by their unexpected encounter as to be carried to her own room.

“But during the few minutes that you did see him, how did he look, and what passed?” reiterated Hetty, whose heart was thrown into a flutter of surprise, delight, and anxiety by the tidings that her lover was in the vicinity; “and the few words that he did say, what were they? Surely, surely, you must recollect every syllable he uttered; I’m sure *I* should; so *do* now, dearest Edith, *do* tell me all about it.”

The party thus solicited might have found some difficulty in parrying such urgent importunity, had not Hetty at length voluntarily abstained from pressing her enquiries on observing that Edith, instead of being peevish and disobliging, as she had at first imagined, was really too ill and too much exhausted to answer for the present any farther interroga-

tories. The poor girl was indeed almost in as pitiable a plight of nervous excitation as that with which she had been afflicted after the death of her brother Richard. To Stanley Forester, to the wounded stranger whose life she had been so instrumental in saving, she had surrendered her young affections in all the fervour of their first bloom and vernal developement; for him had the deep and sealed fountains of her soul been broken up; to him had she resigned a heart more fond, tender, and thrillingly sensitive than mortal ever owned; to him had she made that absolute devotion of every faculty and feeling which constitutes the one passionate, all-absorbing idolatry of a woman's first love. And the being with whom her own existence was thus interwoven,—for she felt as if she only desired to live upon his account,—was environed with dangers and exposed to trials upon which it was perfect agony to reflect. Tracked and pursued like a beast of prey, his toils and anxieties might occasion him to relapse into that dangerous and dementating ill-

ness from which he was hardly yet recovered ; while, if he were taken, he had himself declared that he had nothing whatever to expect but a quick and public execution. Knowing his birth, talents, and accomplishments, she could not, even had he been a common felon, have refused him her commiseration, though he would not, in that case, have awakened any tenderer feeling ; but when she reflected that he was an outlaw only in the cause of law ; a traitor, perhaps, to tyrants, but loyal to his country ; a criminal because he was a patriot, actuated by the highest and holiest wishes for the emancipation of his native land, and periling himself in that sacred cause with the most romantic and chivalrous intrepidity,—it would have been difficult at times to decide whether pity, admiration, terror, suspense or love, formed the predominant feeling of her bosom. Of these sensations, however, suspense soon became the most acute and intolerable, pushing her at times to the very verge of madness. At night she could obtain no sleep, by day no respite ;

her heart throbbed with pulsations of the most painful vehemence; a constant restlessness, both of body and mind, allowed her no peace; she was haunted by perpetual apprehensions; her haggard countenance betrayed the agitation of her soul; every sound startled her, and the most trifling shock or alarm threw her into those hysterical fits to which she had formerly been subject.

So suddenly had Walter's arrest been effected, and so little was his name known to the parties who had committed him to the Guard-house, that the occurrence did not immediately transpire even at Bridgwater, which may account for its not travelling to Orchard Place, the inmates of which were deterred from seeking Walter at the town by a rumour that his detachment had been ordered into Devonshire. Several days had elapsed in this painful suspense, when one morning, as comical Kit, the servant, was standing at the bottom of the front garden which commanded the road, he saw at a distance a dragoon officer approaching

on horseback, and hastening to Hetty, who was moping and sighing in an alcove at another part of the garden, he exclaimed with the freedom of one who knows he may take a liberty because he has been entrusted with a secret—
“ Dumps and doldrums ! Miss Hetty, it would draw tears from a barber’s block to see you so woe-begone. I hope you will pardon me for saying, that when you injure your good looks by fretting, you stand in your own light, like the man in the moon, or Will-o’-the-wisp, or a thief in a candle. There you sit with leaden looks, swaying to and fro and saying nothing, for all the world like a dumb-bell ; but cheer up, Miss, cheer up, for by Hymen and hyssop ! by kisses and kittens ! and by all the cubs and cupids ! I have news that will make you whisk about as merry and as happy as a grig upon a hook, or an eel in a frying pan.”

“ Oh good Christopher ! you have a letter for me—give it me—give it me !” cried Hetty, too much delighted at the thought to rebuke the impertinence of the supposed bearer.

“ Ah! Miss Hetty,” said the flippant menial—
“ your love is like a potato, it shoots from the eye—I see it in your brightened looks. I have no letter for you ; but if flesh and blood be better than ink and paper, and you prefer Mr. Walter himself to the prettiest *billet doux* he ever wrote, you may see him at this very moment trotting towards the house upon a brown horse.”

“ Where ? where ?” said the eager girl, rushing with a crimsoned face to the garden gate ; but she had no sooner caught sight of the approaching horseman than she exclaimed with a look of mingled anger and disappointment—
“ how dare you, Christopher, take such an unwarrantable liberty ?—how dare you thus trifle with my feelings ? *That*, Captain Colyton !—are you blind ? it has not the smallest resemblance to him ; this gentleman is neither so young, nor so slender, nor so graceful, nor so ——”

“ Blinkings and blunderings ! I ask you ten thousand pardons, Miss Hetty : now that he comes nearer, I see that I was mistaken ; but

may I never be hung, if, at a distance, I did not make sure that it was our young master. He wears the dragoon uniform—he is coming to the house—see, he turns towards the gate, and there can be little doubt that he brings us, at all events, some tidings of Mr. Walter.”

Hetty, as the stranger approached, had retreated behind the wall, where she remained listening in almost breathless expectation until she heard the horse stop and the bell ring, when she rushed to Edith’s room, and in a flutter of impatient delight stated the arrival of the visitant, and her full conviction that he was the precursor of Walter, from whom he had no doubt brought a whole budget of pleasant letters.

The dragoon officer, who had thus found his way to Orchard Place, was no other than Major Seagrave, which worthy, having succeeded in pacifying the two bullying brothers of Mrs. Audley by means of heavy bribes, with the addition of such a sum to the lady as might enable her to purchase a husband for the re-

pair of her damaged character, was rewarded for his share in the negociation by the majority which had been so long promised him. Sunderland, however, who liked to change the agents of his dirty work, who was tired of Seagrave's familiarity and assurance, and had other reasons for wishing to get rid of him, procured him an appointment in one of the troops ordered into the West, where, as we shall presently see, the gallant Major had lost no time in exercising, upon his own account, those talents for espionage which had so often been put in requisition for the benefit of his Lordship.

Jaspar Colyton, who had always a sneaking kindness for a brother soldier, who did not dislike Seagrave's vulgar freedom, which he termed a military bluntness, and who was generally hospitable when it afforded him an excuse for tippling, received him very cordially, congratulated him on his promotion, bade him be seated, and understanding that he came upon an affair of some importance, rang for a bottle of claret, observing that he hated business and all matters

of consequence, which he could never bring himself to discuss without something to wet his whistle. Avowing a perfect sympathy with his friend upon this subject, the Major tossed off two or three bumpers, smacked his lips, praised the wine, and then, turning to his host, offered to bet him two guineas to one that he would not guess the occasion of his visit to Orchard Place.

“Not to borrow money, I hope,” cried the Squire, whose former experience led him to entertain shrewd suspicions of this nature; “for may I die if there’s any ready rhino stirring. The rogues of farmers are all behindhand with their rents, and the last of my yellow boys went for Walter’s outfit, which, thanks to the sapient precautions of my *cara sposa*, I had to pay twice over.”

“*Sacre, mon cher camarade!* I wish I came upon no worse errand; but I have ugly news for you, doleful as the passing-bell, and the volley over the grave; so you may as well order another bottle at once to keep up your spirits, *de keel smeren*, as they say in Frogland. This

unlucky son of yours, this Mynheer Wouter, as I have been wont to call him, is like to cost you much more serious trouble than any he may have yet occasioned, although he may soon need no farther outfits, unless it be for the other world." He then proceeded to state the pleasure he had found in renewing his acquaintance with Walter, whom he had introduced to his patron, Lord Sunderland, in the hope that he might obtain promotion and favour from that illustrious nobleman, admitting that he had endeavoured to advance his marriage with Mrs. Audley, a connexion which he considered to be not less honourable than advantageous, particularly when he adverted to her influence with the Commander-in-chief. "Since I left London, however," continued the veracious Major, "I have learnt that the lady was a discarded mistress of the Earl's, a fact of which I remained in utter ignorance until two days ago. *Bloet ende donder! mon cher*, do you think honest Bat. Seagrave would have lent himself to any such scurvy trick as to palm off a *Buona Roba*

upon a brother soldier, and the son of my worthy camerado Jaspar Colyton? Ud's sacrament! I had rather be run through the kidneys with a rusty bayonet; and though I have known my friend Bob Spencer from a boy, and have received favours at his hands, I have written his Lordship such a trimming letter, that I warrant he will never presume to make me his dupe again, or dare to employ me in any more of his nefarious projects. That my friend Walter should suspect me of being in the plot I do not wonder, for the circumstances justified his mistrust, and I had not been afforded an opportunity of establishing my innocence; but that he should conduct himself so outrageously—*Sacre, mon cher!* the young dog is as inflammable as a hand-grenade:—would you have believed it possible that he could come up to me when we were both upon duty, load me with abuse, and even be frantic enough to strike me in the presence of General Trevor and other officers of distinction?"

“How, what! strike his superior officer upon

duty!" cried the Squire, looking utterly aghast, and replacing upon the table the brimming glass that had nearly reached his lips,—“ *Mort de ma vie!* Major Scagrave, it is death by the Articles of War!"

“Neither more nor less, *mon ami*. I don't wonder that you look frightened, for truly it is *een donderkloot*, as Hans Mundungus says, especially when I tell you that the young madman was immediately committed to the Guard-house, and that a Court-martial having been summoned, he will be put upon his trial forthwith. But don't be cast down; drink off your bumper, and keep up your spirits; for much will depend upon my evidence, and let them pass what sentence they will, my interest with Lord Sunderland may, perhaps, succeed in getting it remitted.”

“’Sdeath, Major! if the boy had been shot in action it would less have grieved me, for it is a casualty to which we are all subject, and he would have slept in the bed of honour; but to strike his superior officer on duty!—was the young dog drunk?”

“ I fear not, but we must make it appear that he was, or prove that he was always subject to fits of madness, which we may well do, for anger, you know, is the same thing. Much, I repeat, will depend upon me, and you may rely upon my good offices. Fill your glass, while I draw the cork of this second bottle ; for though you are an old Soldado, a stout-hearted Cavalier, and think no more of facing danger than I do of bolting a bumper—ha ! it is as bright as a ruby, and as pretty Claret as ever was tipped ! —yet do I think it right to prepare you by announcing beforehand, that I have still worse tidings to tell you, ay, ten times worse than any I have yet communicated. *Sacre, mon camarade ! Ik ben geheel bezweet*, as Mynheer says, when I think of the critical predicament in which you are placed, knowing as I do that you are standing upon a mine which may be sprung in an instant, and blow you and your whole family, ay, and your whole fortune too, into a thousand atoms ! ”

“ My fortune ! what the devil do you mean ? explain, if you are in earnest, and don’t hope to frighten me by a dark lantern, a flash in the

pan, or the whizzing of a fusee. What about my fortune?"

"Harkye, *mon cher*! you must let me tell the story my own way, and then you will soon see what danger threatens Orchard Place, and the broad acres that yield you a pretty income, I surmise, even though the farmers are so backward in paying their rents. Immediately after my arrival in this neighbourhood, I picked up a rumour of a mysterious and suspicious character being concealed at Hales Court, supposed by the *mobile* to be some plot-hatching papist, but whom I rather conjectured to be an agent of the P. of O.—you understand me!—several of whom are known to be prowling about the country. In any other cause, sink me! honest Bat. Seagrave would scorn to play the spy; but where a State offender is concerned, and in the service of the King—God bless him! shall we drink his health? the bottle is with you—in the cause of his Majesty, whose servant and soldier I am proud to call myself, and whose livery I have the honour to wear, a deep sense of duty forbade me to be squeamish, so I lurked

about the house night and day,—it was during the time your daughter was an inmate there, and by listening at the parlour casements, and peering now and then into a bed-room window from an elm tree, which I climbed for that purpose, I discovered that the wounded man who had been picked up in Goathurst-wood, and fostered and harboured with so much secrecy and care, was no other than the celebrated Stanley Forester.”

“ Who? what? Stanley Forester? he that was concerned with Russell, Sidney, and Hampden, who landed afterwards with Monmouth, and has since become such an active and enterprising agent among the malcontents for the Prince of Orange? Impossible! he would not venture into these parts; his name is in a proclamation, and a large reward is offered for his apprehension.”

“ I know it; what is more, I know the man by sight: I tell you, that I distinctly recognized him with my own eyes, and what is of greater importance than all, I learnt by the medium of my own ears that the family and your daughter

were fully aware of his identity with the traitor who has so often escaped, and whom the Government is so anxious to secure."

"*Mort de ma vie!* I am confounded, appalled, lost in utter amazement."

"Why, I must confess that if you are not really surprised, you act it well; for your face is flushed to a deep crimson, and the perspiration stands upon your forehead. Permit me to fill your glass—my service to you—our bottle will soon get low, and it might be well, perhaps, to have a third in reserve. And is it possible, *mon camarade*, that you and Mrs. Colyton knew nothing of all this?"

"Nothing whatever, as I hope to be saved."

"*Sacre, mon cher!* I believe you; for a soldier never utters a falsehood, and we all hope to be saved, since few have more need of it; but *tuschen u en mij*, 'twixt you and me, as they say in Frogland, it may be difficult, not to say impossible, to persuade a judge and jury of this fact, especially when they come to know that you were both visitants to Hales Court during this period, a circumstance to which I

myself can depose. No, no — they will hold that you have been aiding and abetting the Sheltons to harbour a proclaimed traitor ; they will consider your predicament to be exactly the same as those of Mrs. Gaunt and Lady Lisle, whose cases you must well recollect, and as our Judges seem all anxious to imitate the bloodthirsty Jeffreys, in the hope of being equally well rewarded, you will not wonder at my assertion that you are standing upon a mine which may be sprung in an instant, and which would blow you and your family and your fortune into a thousand atoms.”

“ But, my dear Major Seagrave,” cried the Squire, who, in the perturbation of his spirit now began to toss off bumper after bumper with great rapidity, in which he was regularly pledged by his companion — “ My dear Major Seagrave ! supposing the facts to be as you state them, no one is aware of this dreadful liability but the parties implicated, who will keep silence for their own sakes ; and as for you, my dear Major, you would not surely act so cruel and ungenerous a part towards an old

brother soldier as to inform against him and bring him into trouble. Into trouble! Gracious Heaven! perhaps to poverty—to ruin—to death!”

“ *Mort diable, mon cher!* it would cut me to the core, for I am naturally soft-hearted and affectionate; but, look you, I am, at the same time, a soldier; I have the King’s commission in my pocket, his uniform upon my back; I have sworn to serve him faithfully,—an oath is a solemn thing,—my line of duty in this case is unequivocal; I am bound in honour to act loyally, and *Sacristie!* what is a soldier without honour? I was about to have the traitor arrested, that I might secure the reward, when I learned that he had made his escape; and if I forego all this, if I forfeit the round sum I should have made; if I stifle the reproaches of my conscience—think of that!—and suffer my regard for you and yours, *mon cher camarade*, to make me swerve from my public duty in this affair, which is neither more nor less than misprision of treason, will you not yourself confess that I am entitled to an ade-

quate compensation, if any indeed can be equivalent to the risks, pains and penalties, that I shall incur ?”

“ Body o’ me, Major—certainly—that is to say—in fact, it will depend upon what you expect, and the quarter whence it is to come,” hesitated the Squire, who had no objection whatever that the Sheltons should be laid under requisition, but shrank from any compromise that might implicate his own purse.

“ Why, look you, *mon ami*—I will be frank with you, and come to the point at once ; but I will first open another bottle — a beautiful long cork, I protest, and a perfect nosegay !—have you much of this glorious claret ?”

“ Yes, yes, enough to last me all my life,” replied the Squire peevishly.

“ *Parbleu, mon cher !* I would not hurt your feelings for the world ; but as you are now situated, a very few dozen may perhaps answer that purpose. But to the point. You always appeared to me, my dear Colyton, the happiest fellow of my acquaintance, even before I knew you had such a stock of this rare claret, and it

has ever been the height of my ambition to imitate your example, retire from the army, and enjoy domestic happiness in the country, the moment I should attain the rank of Major, which to my ears has a much prettier sound than that of Captain. Behold! that long-sought object is gained—I am a Major, and the reward I should have got for apprehending Forester would have enabled me to realize these long-cherished wishes; nay, I should probably get a pretty annuity, that might answer my purpose, were I to inform against the Sheltons, and your daughter, and yourself, and Mrs. Colyton.”

“’Sdeath, Sir! have I not told you that we knew nothing of the matter?”

“*Zwaarten en ponjaarten*, my dear! and have I not told you that though I believe you, a judge and jury may come to a very different conclusion? Now listen, *mon camarade*. As a compensation for what I shall actually lose, as a reward for saving Miss Colyton’s life, to say nothing of your own and of your fortune, which would certainly be confiscated, even if

you escaped a capital conviction,—and in consideration of my exertions to procure a lenient sentence, if not an acquittal for Walter from the pending court-martial, I only ask of you one favour, which it will cost you no trouble in the world to grant.”

“What is it?” demanded the Squire eagerly.

“That you should give me your daughter in marriage. You know I always loved the girl, or I should not have made her an offer when I was stationed here before. The little fortune to which she is entitled will, for the present, answer all my wishes; we will take a snug cottage in the neighbourhood of Orchard Place; I will ride with you, sport with you, smoke with you, and while we are talking over our old campaigns, I will help you to get through the remaining stock of this delicious claret, and we will be all as happy together as the day is long—the bottle is with you—shall we fill a bumper?”

“*Mort de ma vie!* with pleasure, my dear Major, with pleasure, and there’s my hand to bind the bargain!” cried the Squire, overjoyed

to think that he could escape so cheaply from his impending dangers, and never thinking of any repugnance that Edith might feel to the proposed arrangement.—“ I will speak to my daughter instantly, and I have no doubt she will now think better of the matter, although it has just occurred to me that she refused you before.”

“ That was because she did not know when she had a good offer. *Ecoutez, mon cher.* I am somewhat older than the girl, I confess, but not so much as it may seem, for I went into the army a mere child, as you yourself can vouch ; I have been held to carry a passing good figure, and a tolerably comely visage, and though the latter may be thought a trifle too radiant and rubicund, what is it but the ghosts of so many claret bottles that have laid themselves in the Red Sea of my face, in proof that I am neither a flincher nor a milksop ? I am, moreover, a Major of Dragoons, my courage is well established, my family is as good as your own, Lord Sunderland is my friend and patron, and if all this will not content her—*Hemel en aarde !* what does she expect to find ? ”

“ Ay, what indeed, my dear Major? Besides, is it not better she should tie the marriage-noose even with a man she may not deeply love, than run her neck into the hangman’s noose? She is a good girl, and a dutiful daughter, and will do any thing, I am sure, rather than expose her father’s property to confiscation, so you may consider it all settled; but, for Heaven’s sake, do what you can for Walter. Poor boy! poor dear, rash, head-strong boy!—this is part of our contract, you know.”

“ *Sacre*, my dear! I never flinch from my word. If I did any thing in a sneaking, hypocritical, underhand way, you might well think me a shabby fellow; but as I have been open and aboveboard in what I have proposed, no one can deny that my conduct has been handsome and honourable.”

“ Perfectly, perfectly!” cried the Squire, whose real sentiments, however, although he was too prudent to avow them, did not by any means justify the exclamation.

“ *Peste, mon ami!* it is a pity we should part while there is so much good wine in the house;

but as we have now finished the bottle—they are villainous small ones!—I will set off on my return to Bridgwater. I shall soon revisit you, and in the mean while you will, of course, lose no time in preparing Miss Colyton to receive me as her lover.”—So saying, he shook hands with the Squire, in fresh ratification of the treaty they had made, remounted his horse, and returned to his quarters, chuckling at the success of his negotiation, at the immediate prospect of touching Edith’s fortune, and the views of ulterior wealth that promised to reward the machinations he had yet in store.

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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